

THE
COMRADES



WILLIAM
CANTON

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The Comrades

The Comrades

By William
Canton

Poems
Old & New

Author of
"A Child's Book of Saints"
&c. &c.

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London & Edinburgh

In Thanks

For wild flowers gathered at Thurston-Mere

On a day in a black April,

To you,

Dear Barbara, dear Ursula, dear Robin,

This Book

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The Comrades

IN solitary rooms, when dusk is falling,
I hear from fields beyond the haunted mountains,
Beyond the unrepentable forests,—
I hear the voices of my comrades calling
Home ! home ! home !

Strange ghostly voices, when the dusk is falling,
Come from the ancient years ; and I remember
The schoolboy shout, from plain and wood and
river,

The signal-cry of scattered comrades, calling
 "Home! home! home!"

And home we wended when the dusk was falling;
 The pledged companions, talking, laughing,
 singing;
 Home through the grey French country, no
 one missing.
And now I hear the old-time voices calling
 Home! home! home!

I pause and listen while the dusk is falling;
 My heart leaps back through all the long
 estrangement
 Of changing faith, lost hopes, paths disen-
 chanted;
And tears drop as I hear the voices calling
 Home! home! home!

I hear you while the dolorous dusk is falling;
 I sigh your names—the living—the departed!
 O vanished comrades, is it *yours* the poignant
Pathetic note among the voices calling
 Home, home, home?

Call, and still call me, for the dusk is falling.

Call for I fain, I fain would come, but cannot.

Call, as the shepherd calls upon the moorland.

Though mute, with beating heart I hear your calling,

Home! home! home!

Under two Trees

UPON the deep green moss I lie,
And watch the beech against the sky.

The sunny boughs are letting through
A million little gleams of blue.

The Tree of Life could never be
More full of heaven than this tree ;

For each green leaf within my view
Seems matched with one of shining blue.

Under two Trees

5

I lie and think—for who can know
What on the other side may grow?—

Suppose these gleams of blue were each
The leaves of some blue heavenly beech,

Whose azure top had come to be
Blent with the green top of our tree,

And whose immortal boughs of blue
Let gleams of earthly emerald through.

And oh ! if underneath *that* tree
Lay some one dead, who thought of me !

Natura Nutrix

AT dawn she sent him a bird,
Which lured from slope up to slope.
Such singing never was heard !
The bird was Hope—
Hope was the bird.

A star at twilight she sent,
Which shone, and filled from afar
His soul with peace and content.
Hope was the star—
The star was Hope.

Winnie in the Pool

PURE woodland well ! where starry nights
Sink down divinely doubled,
Where day by day soft coloured lights,
Soft shadows, dream untroubled ;

Cool—in our feverish world so cool !
So hushed amid our noises,
That even the throstle, in the pool,
Not sings but merely poises ;

Where life is all reversed, our low
Made high, our upper nether ;

And beech boughs topsy-turvy grow,
And golden broom and heather ;

And one sweet shadow, gay yet mute,
Glides coyly to the surface
When Winnie comes—meets foot with foot,
And lifts *its* face to *her* face.

Strange fairy bather !—fugitive,
Fair semblance of existence !
I love to dream that thou dost live—
She gone—in some charmed distance ;

Dost live—aloof from hope and fear,
From human joy and dolour—
A spirit in a liquid sphere
Of silence and of colour ;

And peering sometimes from the brink
Dost make of earth a survey,
And sigh, “It is *their* world, I think,
Not mine that’s topsy-turvy !”

The Feather

BESIDE his granite, black and rose,
The Egyptian, weaving thoughts together,
For Truth this hieroglyphic chose—
For Truth a feather.

Thrice happy seer, who could divine,—
Thro' all material symbols ranging,—
In Earth's most volatile a sign
Of God's unchanging.

To soar in, in the blue of youth;
To nest in, warm in evil weather;
To sing in—what compares with truth,
When truth's a feather?

The Eternal Wings above us brood !

Tho' starry tracts beneath them lying
Truth's feather falls, a pledge of good
And love undying.

The Choir Boy

LET him slumber ; do not blame !
In the heat his eyelids fell,
And the preacher's voice became
Water babbling down a dell.

Shall I chide those eyelids closed ?
Shake and wake him ? Not at all.
Once an early Christian dozed,
Listening even to St. Paul.

Let him slumber ; he has sung ;
And his treble, shrill and sweet,

The Choir Boy

Soars ev'n now perhaps among
Angels round the Mercy Seat.

If the swallow hath a nest
On Thine altars, Lord my King,
Surely here Thy child may rest,
When his song hath taken wing.

Heights and Depths

H^E walked in glory on the hills ;
We dalesmen envied from afar
The heights and rose-lit pinnacles
Which placed him nigh the evening star.

Upon the peaks they found him dead ;
And now we wonder if he sighed
For our low grass beneath his head,
For our rude huts, before he died.

Ringed with Blue Mountains

RINGED with blue mountains,
Oft when a little lad
Dreamed I of something glad
Hidden beyond;
Ships and the shining sea,
Towns and towers haunted me,
Dreams made me glad and sad—
Life lay beyond!

Ringed with blue welkin,
Oft now, as when a lad,
Dream I of something glad
Hidden beyond;

Ringed with Blue Mountains 15

Something I cannot see
Haunts and entices me ;
Dreams make me glad and sad—
What lies beyond?

Parting

WHERE'ER you go, on ground or grass,
May ne'er you lack a loving lass,
With tender lips and honest eyes,
To make you happy and keep you wise—
Where'er you go.

Where'er you go, on grass or ground,
No truer maid will e'er be found
Than she, whose heart will follow you
With love and sorrow enough for two—
And will you go?

Where'er you go—(oh, foolish eyes
Let not the blinding tears arise!)—
Where'er you go—(for maidhood's sake,
Oh heart, be quiet, and do not break!)—
You shall not go!

How Should You ?

How should you my true love know
From another one?
Rosy face and breast of snow
Cannot make her known.

Brightest hair and bluest eyes
Cannot be a sign—
Many men might recognise
Other maids than mine.

But if you the fairest scan,
My true love is she
Who can jest with any man—
Any man but me.

When we meet with whispered names,
Still and grave she grows
At the thought of all she claims—
All that she bestows !

The Woodwele

I HEAR you in the orchard hid in clouds or apple-
flower,

I hear you tapping, tapping, busy Woodwele, in
my tree;

My heart is glad to hear you in this golden morning
hour,

Your tapping is—you cannot know how sweet
a sound to me.

The old man hears you, and he lifts his head as
white as snow,

And dreams he is the passionate heart of fifty years
ago

The Woodwele

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The glad church bells were ringing then as they
are ringing now ;

The orchard was in bloom, and there was Sunday
in the air ;

My dear love's face was sweeter than the blossom
on the bough—

'Twas bluest May-time in her eyelids and her
golden hair !

We leaned together, lips to lips ; we heard, but
could not see,

A Woodwele—'twas not *you*, friend—tapping in that
apple tree !

Although 'twas Sunday, still, I thought, no Sabbath-
breaker he ;

And though to-day is Sunday too, no Sabbath-
breaker you ;

You cannot break, but you can make, a holy day
for me :

Your tapping crowds my trees with bloom, and
fills my skies with blue.

I hear you, and my cheek is flushed ; my button-hole
is gay ;

I stride erect—what need have I of any staff
to-day ?

Oh, Woodwele, with the laughing note, I feel my
heart beat fast,

My eyes are dim, my cheek is wet, my head grows
white again ;

For I remember, in the light of that long-vanished
past,

How kindly Life has dealt with me, how hard
with better men.

For those church bells, that orchard bloom, that
Woodwele in the tree,

And all that plighted happiness have kept their
pledge to me !

My dear love's eyes are faded and her face is
wrinkled now,

And all the golden colour changed to silver in
her hair ;

But when she smiles—ah, *then* you see the blossom
on the bough ;

And when she speaks, you feel a sense of May-
time in the air !

Through all disguise, my dear old wife, be sure I
see and know

The pretty maid who loved a poet fifty years ago.

The New Day

O^H, happy was the thought of those
Who reckoned by the setting sun
Not finished days, but days begun—
Hushed days begun with starred repose !

Wise had it been that mode to keep—
To say that death, like sunset, brings
A source and not an end of things,
A new day opening with a sleep.

Karma

IN the heart of the white summer mist lay a green
 little piece of the world ;
And the tops of the beeches were lost in the mist,
 and the mist ringed us round ;
All the low leaves were silvered with dew, and the
 herbage with dew was impearled ;
And the turmoil of life was but vaguely divined
 through the mist as a sound.

In the heart of the mist there was warmth—for the
 soil full of sun was aglow
Like a fruit when it colours—and fragrance from
 flowers and a scent from the soil ;

And a lamb in the grass, in the flowers, in the dew,
nibbled—whiter than snow;
And the white summer mist was a fold for us both
against sorrow and toil.

From the fields in the mist came a bleating, a sound
as of longing and need;
But the lamb from the grass in its little green
heaven never lifted its head;
It was innocent, whiter than snow; it was glad in
the flowers, took no heed;
But the sound from the fields in the mist made me
grieve as for one that is dead.

And behold! 'twas a dream I had dreamed, and a
voice made me wake with a start;
Saying: "Hark! once again in the flesh shall ye
twain live your life for a span,
But since whiteness of snow is as nought in mine
eyes without pity of heart,
Lo! the lamb shall be born as a wolf, with a wolf's
heart, but thou as a man!"

Moonlight

SWEET moon, endreaming tower and tree,
Is thy pathetic radiance thrown
From ice-cold wealds and cirques of stone—
Blank moors where life has ceased to be?

Did grass, long ages back, and flowers
Grow there? Did living waters run?
Did happy creatures bless the sun
And greet with joy this world of ours?

And, earlier yet, in one starred zone,
Did this bright planet sweep through space—
Glebe of our glebe, race of our race—
A part and parcel of our own?

Moonlight

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O moonlight silvering tower and tree!
O part of *my* world torn away,
Half of my life, now lifeless clay,
My dead, shine too—shine down on me.

Proverbs

I. All But

“**H**E hath saved a thousand lives !” they cried.
“Such feats should be requited !”
“Friends, so they shall,” the king replied,
“This worthy shall be knighted.

“A jewelled belt and rapier bring,
Plumed cap and cloak of scarlet !
And now your name, sir ?” said the king.
“All But,” replied the varlet.

2. The Hedge

F^{AIR} neighbour of the thatchèd cot
With gloire de Dijon clustered gable,
So star-sweet, on from plot to plot,
Thou trippest, like a nymph of fable ;

So blithe thy smile, so soft thy tone,
So frank those down-dropt eyes half-hidden,
I'd fain the hedge were overthrown,
And our two gardens made one Eden !

But "No !" cries Wisdom, "spare the fence,
The thorn, the ivy blackbirds nest in ;
Leave something for the finer sense,
Some dream of joy to hope and rest in.

“Some glad surprise, some mystery
Of inconceivably sweet meaning!”

Wisdom is wise. My friend and I
Scarce press the topmost twigs by leaning.

3. By-and-By

WITH dreamy nooks, and gleams of sky,
And wild-flowers sweet for fingering
The blossoming Lane of By-and-by
Goes winding, loitering, lingering ;

Till, after many a green delay,
It crosses Dead Endeavour,
And reaches, in the gloaming grey,
The haunted House of Never.

4. At the End of the Day

TWO on a moor befogged I found. One sat,
Hunched on a stone, beside a burnt-out fire.
One posed with drabbed peacock-feathered hat.
And both were old, starved, squalid in attire.

“You seem,” said I to him upon the stone,
“Old friends new met in unexpected woe.”
“Yes,” sighed the man; “my name is *Had-I-known*.”
“And his?” “Oh, his!” he laughed—“*I-told-you-so*.”

5. The Lark

HOWEVER high the lark may soar,
Its nest is on the grassy ground;
It mounts and mounts, yet evermore
Sinks back in showers of joyous sound.

So let my heart rise blithe and free,
So sink again and yet again,
That all my joy in heaven may be,
And all my love may be with men.

The Robin's Song

“OH, the sun on the thatch, and the green on
the tree,
And the long, level fields that were rapture to
me !
Oh, the flags in the water, the blue in the sky !—
Was it one summer since, or have ages slipped
by ?

Now the snow lies in drifts, there is ice on the
eaves,
On the brown moaning beech flicker three russet
leaves ;
And I sob, singing dule, on a fence in the snow.—
Was it centuries back, or a summer ago ? ”

The Robin's Song 35

Pretty fool, singing dule, quit your sorrow, and
sing

How the snow 'll turn to snow-drops, the seasons
will bring

The blithe sun to the thatch, the glad green to the
tree,

And the summer once more to the world, you, and
me.

The Cry of the Wood

“**W**HAT cheer?” cried the Rock to the Wood
“The season is chill ;
‘Green pastures’ no longer are green,
nor ‘still waters’ still ;
The colour of life has been shed—
the faëry fire
Been volleyed in gusts from the boughs
and pashed in the mire ;
My lichens are prickly with frost
in hollow and seam ;
My cup, where the rain glassed the deeps
of heaven like a dream—
My rain, where the little blue bird
alighted to drink,

The Cry of the Wood 37

Is ice ; and my single wild flower
 is dead on the brink !
What cheer—in the cold and the dark
 and dead of the year—
What cheer ? ”

“ What cheer ! ” cried the Wood. “ In the cold
 and tug of the wind,
The cheer of a heart in content,
 a confident mind !
The gale, let it blow, let it bend,
 my branches are strong ;
My trees shall be harps in the gale,
 and thunder a song !
The colour, the leaf, let it perish,
 quenched in the dark—
Oh, never the poorer we,
 on the inward side of the bark
Ringed round by that magical rind,
 we hold at our will
The vision of pastures green
 and waters still.
What cheer ! ” cried the Wood to the Rock.
 “ Good cheer, do you hear ?
Good cheer ! ”

To a Thrush

I^N the hour before the dawn,
In the hour when dreams are true,
When the moonlight's on the lawn
And the grass is hoar with dew,

Ere the clarion cock's astir
Or the cattle in the byre—
Come and perch upon the fir,
Come and take the topmost spire !

I shall wake and, through the pane,
I thy silhouette shall see,
I shall hear thy magic strain,
Rapturous thrush !—and bless thy tree.

Never thrilled through mortal ear
Earthly music more divine ;
Never tree-top soared so near
God's own Paradise as thine !

Let me, till the moon has set
And the darkness stills thy strain,
Listen ; then, with eyelids wet,
Turn to happy sleep again.

April Voices

THE birches of your London square
“Have leafed into an emerald haze”?
Then come—you promised; come and share
The fuller spring of *our* last April days.
The ash, who wastes whole golden weeks in doubt,
The very ash is long since out;
The apple-boughs are muffled—do but think!—
With crowded bloom of maid’s blush, white and
pink;
The whins are all ablaze!
Now the income rates outrageous

Picture the pigeons tumbling high in air!
Fancy the jet-eyed squirrel on the bough!

Leave the poor birches in your London square ;
The spring and we await you here, and now.

Beneath our old world thatch your pulse shall beat
To the large-leisured rhythm of woodland
ease ;
No feverish hurry haunts our otiose trees ;
Your slumber shall be sweet.

The little brown bird's nest,
The four blue eggs beneath the patient breast,
The lambkin's baby face,
The joy of liquid air
And azure space—
Are these not better than your dingy square,
Your mazes of inhospitable stone,
Your crowds who cannot call their souls their own,
Your Dance of Life-in-death ?
Come to the fields, where Toil draws wholesome
breath,
And Indigence still keeps her apron white.

Enough that you arrive too late to hear
The migrants in the night !

When wild March winds have dropt, and all is
still,

A spirit-touch unseals the dreaming eyes;
One starts, and, leaning from the window-sill,
Catches the liquid notes, heard fine and clear
In hushed dark skies.

How pleasant had it been to watch with you,
Day after day,
The fairy flowering of the hawthorn spray !
Each thorn upon the stem
Protects one rose-tipped, green-and-golden gem;
A bud, a thorn !—'tis thus the whole tree through.
No,—where in tender shoots the branches end
There is no spear !
But bud and bud and bud are crowded here;
'Tis Nature's cue
To lavish most what least she can defend.

Come to the woods and see
How in the warm wet sunny mist of morn
Green leaves, like thoughts in dreamful hours, are
born,
And in the mist birds pipe on every tree.
Come, and the mossy boulder on the hill

Shall teach what beauty springs of sitting still.
The world's work! Is the life not more than
 meat?
And is your shrill immitigable strife,
Your agony of existence, life?

The good earth calls with voices strangely sweet ;
Come to your mother earth—th' old English earth,
 The ruddy mother of a mighty race—
Dear ruddy earth, with early wheat
Pale green on plough ridge and with kindly grass
New sprung in fields that take no care !
 Come to the friends who love your eager
 face ;
Come share our rustic peace, our frugal mirth ;
Come, and restrict for once your happy Muse
To the four hundred words we yokels use
For life and love and death—why, all the lore
Of ancient Egypt hardly needed more !
Will London miss her poet? There, alas!
 No man is missed. Come make our roof your
 own,
And leave the birches dreaming in your square
 Of forests far beyond the maze of stone.

The Water-Mill

FROM the lone blue hills afar,
Where the sunset lingers long, *like Luc,*
And the shepherd's folding star
Lark-like hangs in crystal song; *(the dence he does!)*

From the hills so blue and lone,
Where the magic pine-trees sway,
And the dumb grey boulder-stone
Dreams the centuries away;

Down the strath, and through the wood,
Past the farms, across the plain,
Runs the stream, a silvery flood,
Turns the wheel and grinds the grain;

Gathers colour, gathers tune,
From the haunts where it has strayed,
Morning, noon, and afternoon,
Pours them throbbing through the lade.

Passion-tinged, experience-rife,
Thus let Time's swift current roll,
Turning all the wheels of life—
So shalt thou have bread, my soul!

The Kingfisher

NOT where the shining spaces of the mere
Lie blue and clear,
But where the brook's small waters run
Reflecting emerald leaves and chinks of sun,
On a dead branch, in solitude
It watches for its fleeting food,—
The Kingfisher !

So, poised on dead and dying things,
Not in the glare of life, but in the sought,
Dim, tranquil umbrage of sequester'd thought,
The soul keeps vigil o'er the living springs.

Bright bird, thine azure wings, thy ruddy breast—
 The colours of the furrow and the sky—
 Remind me that at worst and best
 Akin to earth and aimed for heaven am I.

Leaf-cloistered in a solitary reach,
 Thou keepest watch without a mate,
 Without a song;
 Even so the soul that would await
 Joy by the living springs must linger long,
 Withdrawn from human fellowship and speech.

Hark! dry wood snaps. Who dares intrude
 Upon thy sea-green solitude?
 (Hush! hush!) No human will shall do
 Thy spirit wrong; thou shalt be left alone.
 Alas, one flash of blue—
 Heaven's colour—tells that thou art flown.

Autumn

F^{EEL} sad in autumn? Faith, not I!
Life is too thronged, too brief, sighs are too
vain,

To waste it in a sigh.

Why sad? Because the tumbled woodlands moan;
And the last summer birds have flown;
And curfew has rung, and quenched each flower its
fire;

And, yellow and brown,
From oak and elm the foliage flutters down,
And drifts of leaves, rain-rotten, mask the mire;
And the robin pipes alone

Between the plumps of rain;
And all things seem to grieve and to regret
Sweet dawns and dreamy days and suns for ever set?

'Tis but our childish fancies which invest
Nature with our unrest.

There is no pathos in the falling leaves;
No sorrow in the rain or wind.

Why should the year not close
As gaily with the snow as with the rose?

'Tis but the inveterate primeval mind
Which dreams that Nature feels like man and
grieves.

Nay, rather were not *this* a mournful thing?

Conceive the year reversed;

The seasons, last made first,

Worked backward thro' the summer to the spring;

Snow sifted; dead leaves caught,

Whirled, red and yellow, back to branch and spray;

Changed with the magic ease of thought

To emerald coverts of an August day;

And thro' the wondrous hours

The ripe fruit soured, then turned once more to
flowers,

The flowers to buds, and these again withdrawn

Some starry night of May or April dawn;

And flake by flake with them

The dwindling leaves close crumpled to the stem,

Till every tree stood bare,

And in the biting February air
We saw the snowdrop, lastling of the year,
Shut in the wintry drift, and disappear !

Autumn would surely then
Be the miraculous season among men ;
But who would care ot sing
The dolour of the retrogressing spring—
The spring which gave no more, which but with
drew

Within an icy bosom
The blue-bird's piping and the apple-blossom,
And all the hope the old glad order knew ?

He Changeth the Times and the Seasons

IF life were but a year !
If only once 'twere given to us to see
Grass newly sprung, and daffodils,
The baby lambs, the blossom on the tree ;
And if but once 'twere ours to hear
The cuckoo in the fresh leaf-muffled hills—

If life were but a year !
And if no more than once we could behold
Bleached sheaves, and apples flushed with light,
And leagues of wood aflame with red and gold ;
If only once, once only, we could hear
The swallows trooping for their southern flight—

52 He Changeth the Times

If life were but a year !

And no succession of the seasons brought,
As season after season brings,

The sweet recurrence of familiar thought,
The changes habit makes so dear,
The associations of accustomed things—

I strive, in soul and sense,

To realise the loss—the dolorous dearth
Of sounds which reach the spirit's ear,
Of many a prompting of the gracious earth,
Of many a blessed influence,
Vision, and touch—if life were but a year.

You great-winged angels four,

Bring with the lamb and snowdrop youth re
newed,

Gladness and hope ; and, when the green

Takes colour, peace and toil's contented mood.

Spin, Earth, sun-circling evermore,

And keep life sweet with God's divine routine.

Pearls and Simples

I

His long grey shadow lingers in the pass ;
He slowly gains the ridge ; he turns to
wave

A last farewell. (God speed you !) — He is
gone !

Sunset will light him to some quiet cave ;

Or haply, stretched a-lee some sheltering stone

Among the mountain grass,

He'll lie to-night and listen to the deep

Hushed breathing of the hills, and watch the
skies

Till one great star shall lead him by the eyes,
Through drowsy deserts, to the crib of sleep.

II

A merry ouzel chattering on his rock,
A bleating lamb, will wake him ere the day
Hath reddened to the flower of four o'clock,
And he will rise and wander on his way.
And this hath been his mode of life for years,—
To roam in search of simples through the hills,
To fish for pearls where upland waters fall
Murmuring o'er mossy weirs,
To sleep where fortune and when darkness
wills—
Praise be to Him who doth not sleep at all !

III

The little rrd-roofed town where he was born
Sits robin-like amid the trees and snow ;
And here he winters, making song and shoe
Like old Hans Sachs. But let the windflower blow,
And hyacinths light the woods with wells of
blue,
And white stars gem the thorn—
The leafless sloe, why, lo you ! he is dressed
For travel, and in honest leather shod
From his own lapstone, starts 'mid smile and nod
Hillward once more upon his annual quest.

IV

What rustic thorpe, lone farm, or bosky grange,
 But counts upon his coming year by year ?
 He rarely fails them. In a world of change
 These old-time nooks to him are strangely dear.
 He comes and goes ; he leaves at every door
 A cheery memory. When at last his way
 Shall lead him from the kindly homes of men,
 And he can come no more,
 "If not this year, why, next," the folk will say ;
 "He sometimes failed, but always came again."

V

For habit makes us hopeful, and we thrive
 Best on this homely nurture of routine.
 "If not this year, why, next," will oft be
 said ;
 And so for them, long after grass is green
 Upon the simple mound where he is laid,
 He still will be alive—
 A strong blithe man of helpful hand and speech,
 Still wandering somewhere, sitting by some fire
 Of farm or cottage in a neighbouring shire,
 Or telling tales beneath some village beech.

VI

Dear in a world of change, because they change
So little, are these old homes. Since first he came,
Roads, houses, trees, brooks, meadows, mountain-
range

Have, like the heaven above them, seemed the
same.

The ivied church hath scarcely hoarier grown,

Yet age hath silvered many a lusty head ;

The little ones of twenty years ago

Have children of their own :

Beneath the shadow of the elms the dead

Have heaved the earth in many a grassy row.

VII

But most he haunts the hills. For days and days,

Among the mossy solitudes, the coy

Wild lives in fur and feather are his only

Companions ; but a deep impassioned joy

Prevents his heart from ever feeling lonely.

Merely to sit and gaze

On God's green earth and gracious heaven, to live

In cloud and rock, in lichen and in leaf,

To feel but Nature's gladness, Nature's grief,

Are happiness no pride of life could give.

VIII

He knows all tracks, the loops and glassy linns
 Of every burn, each winding river-reach;
 The limits where each herb and flower begins
 And ends; the virtues and the name of each.
 And often of these uplands doth he speak,
 As if in some mysterious way each stone
 And rush, and every cry and chirp of song
 Were his from plain to peak—
 As if they were in some strange sense his own
 And to none else could ever so belong.

IX

And oft he tells, in phrase of dreamy power,
 Of sights that filled his heart with strength and
 rest,—
 As, how he watched the lean blue heron wait
 With head and bill sunk gravely on its breast,
 Among the shadowy shoals, as fixed as fate,
 As patient of the hour;
 And once when rain and wind had raged amain
 And all again was bright, he chanced to see
 A milk-white fawn beneath a rowan-tree
 Which blazed with crimson fruit and drops of
 rain.

x

As though of weightiest import, he insists

On merest trifles, no one notes at all.

God steeps, he says, the rain-clouds and the
mists

In gold of dawn and sunset ere they fall.

Though we by tender gloamings moved may
weep,

He smiles; *his* sunset's but the other side

Of some one else's morning. When he
lies

Beneath a tree to sleep,

He thinks how leaves and little cares can hide

God in His heaven and systems in their
skies.

xi

The Oak-tree croons to him a wondrous song :

“ My type, which hath sufficed for centuries,

Doth still hold good. Old elements new-
wrought

Have streamed from age to age beneath this
guise.

Through what most ancient language have
man's thought

And feeling streamed so long ? ”

To him the great Dust blown upon the wind
 Is a weird vision. Lo! among her own,
 He sees sweep past, unworshipped and unknown,
 The venerable Mother of Mankind!

XII

A little naked child in tender wise
 She carries nestling to her slumb'rous breast.
 Her milk hath hushed its passionate human cries,
 And lulled it into ever dreamless rest.
 Absorbed in fantasy, he thinks he sees
 The infant's playthings as she glideth by,
 For countless fragments, curious and old,
 Strange animals and trees,
 Like broken arks of childhood, mingled lie
 Within her garment's deep mysterious fold.

XIII

He marvels at the discontent of men
 Cankering their lives with labour and despite.
 One April midnight, waking on the hill,—
 Jupiter set, Arcturus burning bright
 I' the central blue,—he heard a song-thrush
 thrill

The wooded little glen
With ravishing roulades ; and in the hush
Of those blue heavens and that enchanted earth,
He asked was all men strove and toiled for worth
The rapturous music of that happy thrush.

xiv

The ancient mysteries of life and death
Perplex him not. Why should he hope or
fear?
Because men clamour, and no one answereth
Out of the clouds? He knows that God is
here—
Not in some distant heaven, but close at hand—
Around us, nay, within us—well aware
Of us and all our motions. Like a nest
The world lies in His hand.
What *can* the callow nestlings chirping there
Conceive of Him who holds them to His
breast ?

xv

To him the doubts and anguish of the age
Seem raving winds among the peaks of stone.

O sceptic spirit, climb the hills and learn
 That God exists, and man is not alone!
 Question the Arctic lichen and the fern,
 The moss and saxifrage !
 High up the sea-pink blooms. 'Twill answer
 thee:
 "The North wind blew us hither in days of
 yore.
 These rocks of ours were once an island
 shore
 Amid the ice-drift of an ancient sea !"

XVI

The wandering flora of the Northern Star
 Drifted for centuries on berg and floe.
 Through the white ages Europe gleamed afar—
 One mighty snow-peaked archipelago.
 And here a fern was stranded, here a grass,
 And here a saxifrage laughed out in flower
 And made a gladness in the lone bright
 air.
 Who saw the ages pass?
 Who shaped the land afresh, yet every hour
 Thought these small fragile creatures worth His
 care?

XVII

Who raised them with the hills on which they grew,
And bade His clouds subserve them? Who
sustained
Their weakness through the wondrous cosmic
change
When the great ocean of the north was drained,
And new-time plants and beasts began to
range
A continent made new?
They blossomed in the prehistoric snow ;
They blossom still ; it may be that once more
New seas shall find them on their ancient shore
Amid a later archipelago.

XVIII

Thus, being confident of God, he takes
No trouble to himself whate'er befall.
Enough that God loves everything He makes—
Through countless ages hath remembered all.
Nor is he anywise concerned to know
Aught more of God than God may will. He
seeks
No pledge, no knowledge wherefore he exists
Or whither he shall go.

He lives on faith,—a flower upon the peaks,
 Cared for and loved though wrapped in blinding
 mists.

XIX

Out of delight to find a little space
 For trees and flowers which he may call his own
 In this old garden of Earth, where'er he goes
 He carries apple-pip and cherry-stone,
 And seed of divers trees; and these he sows
 In many a lonely place,
 And little cairns mark every chosen spot.
 Exceeding joy to him it is to know
 His trees among the hills in hundreds grow,
 And still will bloom when he is long forgot.

XX

Thus through the years he wanders, gathering pearls
 For beauty, culling herbs for human pain,
 And planting trees to be his boys and girls—
 His fair and fruitful children. Not in vain
 Can he have lived whose heart hath found such rest,
 Who dwells in such high thoughts of men and
 things,

64 Pearls and Simples

Who loves through all his wayfaring to read
And carry in his breast
The book wherein old Epictetus sings
The grand Te Deum of a pagan creed.

XXI

For thus saith Epictetus: "Ought we not,
Whether we dig or plough or eat, to sing
To God this homage: '*Great is God who
gives
These tools of tillage and of harvesting ;
Who fashioned unto every man that lives
Hands equal to his lot :
And great is God who gives us each the power
Of swallowing, and a stomach for our keep,
And faculty of breathing while asleep,
And imperceptible growth from hour to hour.*'

XXII

"And this at all times and in every place
We ought to sing ; but our most joyous praise
Should rise to heaven that God hath given us grace
To know these things, and walk in blameless
ways.

Well, seeing most of you are dumb and blind,
 Were it not meet some man should fill for you
 This charge, and sing to God his whole life
 long
 A hymn for all mankind?
 Besides, what else can Epictetus do,—
 A lame old man,—save honour God with
 song? ”

The Isle of Dream

SAILING under the sunrise, mariners watch'd for
the gleam,
Hò-rai-sàn, of thy magical peaks ; and once and
again
Caught it, crowded on sail, and steer'd for the Island
of Dream—
Sail'd and sail'd till the vision wavered, slipped
from their ken,
Vanished ! Yet was the story loved and believed.
It was told
How it was ever sunrise there, ever spring of the
year ;
There disease was unknown, and sorrow ; no one
grew old ;

The Isle of Dream 67

There the heart was at peace—was at peace, and
what is more dear ?

Did he credit the story, Vasobiovè the Wise ?

Yea, and sailed with a burthen of trouble, sighing
in pain :

“ Weary, weary am I of life, of earth, of the skies !

Hò-rai-sàn, give me rest for the body, rest for the
brain,

Rest, and quiet of spirit ! Rise in the gold of the
dawn,

Show thy magical summits !” And lo, the Island
appears—

Glimmering peaks in the azure, beaches of bower and
lawn ;

And the Sage has his wish—and the peace of a
hundred years !

Did it seem such an age ? Nay, it seemed but a
fugitive year.

Yet long ere the year had ended he wearied of
rest.

The calm of the fortunate Isle grew sullen and
drear ;

He tired of the radiant face, of the virgin breast ;

Tired of the self-same spring, of the dawn's un-
changing glow,
Tired of the bliss monotonous, pleasure untroubled
by pain ;
Long'd in the golden calm for a blast of the winter
snow,
Long'd for the men of his race, for their very
sorrows again.

Vasobiovè the Wise—wiser now had he grown—
Returned from the peaks of illusion, the glamorous
shore,
White and a-tremble with age, a stranger whose
name was unknown,
Whose roof-tree and hearth had perished, whom
tribesmen remembered no more.
“Vanished,” he cried, “is my home ; wasted the
days of my life !
Over that Island accursed deep may the billows
roll !
The only rest in the world is a change in the
weapons of strife—
The only fortunate Isle is a man's invincible soul.”

The Legend of Childhood

Laus Infantium

IN praise of little children I will say
God first made man, then found a better way
For woman, but His third way was the best.
Of all created things the loveliest
And most divine are children. Nothing here
Can be to us more gracious or more dear.
And though when God saw all His works were
good
There was no rosy flower of babyhood,
'Twas said of children in a later day
That none could enter Heaven save such as they.

The earth, which feels the flowering of a thorn,
Was glad, O little child, when you were born;

70 The Legend of Childhood

The earth, which thrills when skylarks scale the
 blue,
Soared up itself to God's own Heaven in you ;

And Heaven, which loves to lean down and to
 glass
Its beauty in each dewdrop on the grass—
Heaven laughed to find your face so pure and fair,
And left, O little child, its reflex there !

Any Father

WE talked of you ; in happy dreams
Our hearts foretold you,
O little Blossom !
And yet how marvellous it seems
To see and hold you !
We guessed you boy, we guessed you maid,
Right glad of either ;
How like, how unlike all we said,
Upon her knee there,
You lie and twit us,
O little Blossom !

Any Mother

So sweet, so strange—so strange, so sweet
Beyond expression,
O little Blossom !
To sit and feel my bosom beat
With glad possession ;
For you are ours, our very own,
None other's, ours ;
God made you of *our* two hearts alone,
As God makes flowers
Of earth and sunshine,
O little Blossom !

A Philosopher

Y^{ES}, you may let them creep about the rug.
And stir the fire ! Aha ! that's bright and
snug.

To think these mites—ay, nurse, unfold the
screen !—

Should be as ancient as the Miocene ;
That ages back beneath a palm-tree's shade
These rosy little quadrupeds have played,
Have cried for moons or mammoths, and have
blackened

Their faces round the Drift Man's fire—in fact,
That ever since the articulate race began
These babes have been the joy and plague of
man !

74 The Legend of Childhood

Unnoticed by historian and sage,
These bright-eyed chits have been from age to age
The one supreme majority. I find
Mankind hath been their slaves, and womankind
Their worshippers ; and both have lived in dread
Of time and tyrants, toiled and wept and bled,
Because of some quaint elves they called their own.
Had little ones in Egypt been unknown,
No Pharaoh would have had the power, methinks,
To pile the Pyramids or carve the Sphinx.

Take them to bed, nurse ; but before she goes
Papa must toast his little woman's toes.
Strange that such feeble hands and feet as these
Have sped the lamp-race of the centuries !

A Poet

THE sun, the sea, the forest wild—
All nature loves a little child.

“Hence ! to the woods and earn your bread !”

The woods were deep with drifted snow.

“Seek till you find where violets blow,
And bring them home,” the step-dame said.

The sun, the sea, the forest wild—
All nature loves a little child.

76 The Legend of Childhood

Weeping she wandered through the snow ;
 The way was lone ; the wind was bleak ;
 Weeping she went ; she could not speak—
Her little heart was choked with woe.

The sun, the sea, the forest wild—
All nature loves a little child.

Her own dear mother, if she'd known,
 Had turned to violets in the mould ;
 But oh ! the snow lay deep, and cold
Had frozen all the earth to stone.

The sun, the sea, the forest wild—
All nature loves a little child.

Within the woods the homeless maid
 Found wreaths of snow and leafless trees.
 She wanders on until she sees
A great fire in a wintry glade.

The sun, the sea, the forest wild—
All nature loves a little child.

Approach, dear child, and have no fear !
Twelve stones were lying on the ground,
And twelve strange men were sitting round
The gladsome fire as she drew near.

The sun, the sea, the forest wild—
All nature loves a little child.

And one, upon the largest stone,
Who held a staff the chief appeared.
Oh, white and old was he ! His beard
Into his very lap had grown.

The sun, the sea, the forest wild—
All nature loves a little child.

The old chief smiled, and cried : “Soho !
What is’t the little woman seeks ?”
With great tears running down her cheeks,
She spoke and told him all her woe.

The sun, the sea, the forest wild—
All nature loves a little child.

78 The Legend of Childhood

“I have no violets, my dear ;
My name is January,” he said ;
“But March has flowers”—March bowed his
head—
“Change places, Brother March ; come here !”

The sun, the sea, the forest wild—
All nature loves a little child.

March sat on January's seat ;
The snow-drifts melted ; grass was seen ;
The trees exhaled a mist of green ;
Soft breezes made the woodland sweet.

The sun, the sea, the forest wild—
All nature loves a little child.

And violets sprang in magic store,
And strewed with purple all the glade.
Oh, happy, happy little maid,
Fill full your tattered pinafore !

The sun, the sea, the forest wild—
All nature loves a little child.

A lark piped silvery on a cloud.

“There!” March cried gaily; “run away!

What ever will your step-dame say?”

And all the Twelve laughed glad and loud.

The sun, the sea, the forest wild—
All nature loves a little child.

Apple-Bloom and Apple

WHEN little Osy, two years old,
Once saw the Spring sun dapple
The apple-bloom with blurs of gold,
She asked me for an apple.

“There are no apples, darling, yet ;
The bloom’s still white and rosy ;
Wait till the harvest, then you’ll get——”
“I tannot wait,” said Osy.

I told her of the changing year,
The nipping frost, the raw gust,
The clement rain, the sunny cheer,
From April on to August.

Apple-Bloom and Apple 81

"So wait till Autumn paints them red,
And makes them sweet for eating !"
"No, *shake* them—shake them down !" she said,
With great blue eyes entreating.

I can't resist a mouth that pouts
And trembles, ripe for crying ;
I cannot bear the first sad doubts
In large eyes so relying.

I shook the trunk ; the branches snowed
Till all the grass was whitened ;
The blue jay darted down the road,
And screamed that he was frightened.

Of course I shook and shook in vain,
And Osy, standing under,
Laughed and shrugged off the blossomy rain,
Till glee was changed to wonder ;

And wonder turned to pain and doubt ;
Her eyes grew full and pleading ;

82 The Legend of Childhood

Her quivering lips began to pout ;
Her fists were closed for kneading ;

And then there rose a long sharp cry,
As if her heart were breaking :—
“ You see, my darling child,” said I,
“ Apples don’t grow with shaking.”

One day when all the apple-tree
With fruit was bowed and ruddy,
Osy, with dolly on her knee,
Sat in a child’s brown study.

The west wind came with pleasant sound,
And as the leaves were turning,
An apple tumbled to the ground,
And lay there plump and burning.

And Osy’s face grew bright and glad,
From her dim day-dream waking—
A touch had given what could be had
Not for a world of shaking.

In the Corner

So often, poor wee rogue, they sent
His blithe heart into banishment,
So oft his blurred angelic face
Was wall-ward turned in dire disgrace,

That, moved with pity for his sake,
What does his grand-dad do but take
Palette and brush, and fill with bloom
That penal corner of the room ?

Small woodmen share the culprit's grief ;
Fairies peep out from flower and leaf ;
His heart the droll brown squirrel cheers,
And sets him smiling through his tears.

84 The Legend of Childhood

“Grandpa,” they cried, “you spoil the child!”

More kindly wise the old artist smiled :

“Pain often hardens—have a care !

God does not leave *our* ‘corners’ bare.”

The Winter Sleep

WHEN snow began she tried to make
No noise—was frugal in her mirth;
She feared her childish romps might break
The winter slumber of the Earth.

When roofs shook down the thawing snow,
And snowdrops peeped—what joyous cries !
Had not dear Earth begun to throw
The clothes off, and to open eyes ?

But when once more the snow came down,
And hoar-frost whitened every pane,
Her brows were puckered in a frown,
The change perplexed her little brain.

86 The Legend of Childhood

She thought and thought how this might be ;

At last “ Oh my, papa ! ” she cried ;

“ We thought she was awake—but she

Has only turned upon her side ! ”

An April Grief

WITH little breast that wildly heaved,
With streaming eyes and hair uncurled,
She sat and sobbed—as if she grieved
For all the woes of all the world.

A sudden pause ! She raised her head
In puzzled thought, and still a tear
Hung, like a dewdrop, as she said :
“ Why was I crying, mamma dear ? ”

“ Because I took poor Pussy’s part.”
Then all the woes beneath the skies
Once more convulsed that little heart
And rained from those despairing eyes !

88 The Legend of Childhood

Oh, never in the coming years,
 My darling, may it be your lot
To know a grief too deep for tears,
 Or one that *cannot* be forgot !

The Great World

A WILD adventurer, he loved to fare
On wondrous voyages from chair to chair.
He coasted wall and furniture until
He reached the Indies of his wayward will.
His quests recalled th' intrepid days of yore
When tars who woo'd the ocean hugged the shore
When sirens sang to port and birds to lee,
And rigging brushed the blossom from the tree.
But one spring afternoon a breeze from Spain
Awoke a small Columbus in his brain;
His legs felt sturdy under him; the door,
Through which he'd never passed alone before,
Opened on marvels. Brightness, sound and scent
Called him to go and play with them. He went.

90 The Legend of Childhood

He reached the middle of the village green,
Then stopped and gazed. Great nature, what a
 scene!

On every side to distances untold
The grass in vast savannas round him rolled.
The cottages were leagues and leagues away.
The enormous spaces that about him lay
Seemed glad to find him little and alone.
A thousand miles up, great white clouds were
 blown

Across a sky as bright and clear as glass,
And here their shadows raced across the grass.
Cloud-gazing made one's little senses reel,
For all the sky seemed, like a glittering wheel,
To turn clean over.

 With uneasy mind,
He marked the tall trees waving in the wind.
Each tossed its mazy arms and wagged its
 head

So grimly that he held his breath for dread.
How had he vexed the beech, the elm, the fir?
Their dreadful voices told how vexed they were.

He thought of home, for what can harm or hurt
The child whose fingers clutch his mother's skirt?

He turned to seek the refuge of the wise—
But oh, the horror of those startled eyes!
Between him and that far-off cottage door
Swayed the green terror of a sycamore.
The great tree rocks above him, cries, expands,
And strives to snatch him with a hundred hands.

Oh, never till this moment had he known
How terrible it was to be alone;
Never till now been clear that he was he,
Not one with earth and air and stone and tree,
But something different and quite apart.
And now dismay has filled his little heart.
He drops upon the grass; the earth and skies
Collapse about him as he sobs and cries.

Oh joy of joys! a friend, a helper hears
His piteous wail, compassionates his tears.
A furry head is rubbed against his cheek;
Against his hair, a body soft and sleek.
It is—it is his Puss! O Pussy, hark!
The most breath-catching story you shall hear
That ever child told cat since Vyaghre,
The Tiger, sneezed the first puss in the ark.

92 The Legend of Childhood

Child's dreams, child's memories are so blent that we
Can scarce trace shining cloud from shining sea.
Did Pussy laugh and tell him—who can say?—
He need not mind the skies ; it was their way.
That as for size and distance, after all
The whole world was comparatively small ;
That big things would grow little, far things near
As he grew old ; that trees had made men fear
Ever since mother Eve plucked fruit from bough ;
'Twas but a freak of theirs to mop and mow,
And catch at stars and clouds with aguish arm ;
Green foolish giants they, they did no harm.

Did Pussy in her wisdom answer thus ?
Strange sympathies united him and Puss
In those dim days of wonder and romance,
And sympathy projected speech perchance.
In any case, his arms he flung around
Dear Puss, and almost hugged her off the ground ;
Got firm on foot ; began to recognise
No tree could see him if he shut his eyes ;
Set off, determined never more to roam
When once safe housed.

So Pussy led him home.

A New Poet

I WRITE. He sits beside my chair
And scribbles too in mute delight ;
He dips his pen in charmed air ;
What is it he pretends to write ?

He toils and toils ; the paper gives
No clue to ought he thinks. What then ?
His little heart is glad ; he lives
The poems that he cannot pen.

Strange fancies throng that baby brain.
What grave sweet looks ! What earnest eyes !
He stops—reflects—and now again
His unrecording pen he plies.

94 The Legend of Childhood

It seems a satire on myself—

These dreamy nothings scrawled in air,
This thought, this work ! Oh, tricky elf,
Wouldst drive thy father to despair ?

Despair ! Ah, no ; the heart, the mind
Persists in hoping,—schemes and strives
That there may linger with our kind
Some memory of our little lives.

Beneath his rock i' the early world
Smiling the naked hunter lay,
And sketched on horn the spear he hurled,
The urus which he made his prey.

Like him I strive in hope my rhymes
May keep my name a little while.—
O child, who knows how many times
We two have made the angels smile !

The Ladder

I N our woodyard one apple-tree
Quite touched the sky, I knew ;
For when the boughs swung I could see
Blue bits of heaven break through.

The big red apples glittered bright
So high up in the sun,
An angel, without stooping, might
Have plucked the topmost one.

A long, green-painted ladder leant
Among the boughs ;—'twas odd,
But I was sure that ladder went
Right up the tree to God.

96 The Legend of Childhood

I longed to climb and see His place,
But then I was so young—
Just two—and what a fearful space
Divided rung from rung !

The Upward Look

I CRIED because I was afraid.
Strange people came about the place ;
They'd laid my mother in a chest,
And spread a cloth upon her face.
And then they whispered up and down ;
And all of them were dressed in black ;
And women that I did not know
Kissed me and said, "Poor little Jack!"
And then the great black horses came—
Their tails trailed almost on the ground—
And there were feathers on the coach,
And all the neighbours stood around.

And when the horses went away,
The house no longer seemed the same,

98 The Legend of Childhood

And I grew frightened, and I called
 For Mother ; but she never came,
And so I cried ! But then my Aunt
 Came weeping when she heard my cries ;
And I was such a little thing
 I looked up to her streaming eyes.

I looked up to her streaming eyes !
 And it has often seemed since then,
At times of threatening, doubt, distress,
 That, full-grown to the life of men,
Just so have I looked up—just so
 Some being of a higher sphere,
Aware of laws from me concealed,
 Has downward looked and dropped a tear—
A tear of pity for the pain
 That I must feel when I've outgrown
This larger childhood, and have learned
 To know myself as I am known.

Birth and Death

S^{HE} came to us in storm and snow—
The little one we held so dear—
And all the world was full of woe,
And war and famine plagued the year ;
And ships were wrecked and fields were drowned
And thousands died for lack of bread ;
In such a troubled time we found
That sweet mouth to be kissed and fed.

But oh, we were a happy pair,
Through all the war and want and woe ;
Though not a heart appeared to care,
And no one even seemed to know.

100 The Legend of Childhood

She left us in the blithe increase
 Of glowing fruit and ripening corn,
When all the nations were at peace,
 And plenty held a brimming horn—
When we at last were well to do,
 And life was sweet, and earth was gay ;
In that glad time of cloudless blue
 Our little darling passed away.

And oh, we were a wretched pair
 In all the gladness and the glow ;
And not a heart appeared to care,
 And no one even seemed to know.

Kozma the Smith*

ALL the fair maidens are out in the street,
Singing from dusk till the blush of the
morn,—

* "The Rusálkas are female water-spirits. . . . They are generally represented under the form of beauteous maidens, with full and snow-white bosoms, and with long and slender limbs. . . . Their hair is long and thick and wavy, and green as is the grass. . . . Besides the full-grown Rusálkas there are little ones, having the appearance of seven-year-old girls. These are supposed, by the Russian peasants, to be the ghosts of still-born children, or such as have died before there was time to baptize them. . . . If any person who hears one of them lamenting will exclaim, 'I baptize thee in the name of the Father,' &c., the soul of that child will be saved, and will go straight to heaven. Dead children are supposed to come back in the spring to their native village under the semblance of swallows and other small birds, and to seek by soft twittering or song to console their sorrowing parents."—See Ralston's "Songs of the Russian People," pp. 118, 144, 213, *et passim*.

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Singing a welcome, in cadences sweet,

Unto the spring-rain, the flax, and the corn :
For the Gold Plough has passed over valley and
hill,

With the Lord God holding the oxen in hand ;
While St. Peter beside, with his goad, whistled
shrill ;

And the Mother of Christ cast the seed o'er the
land.

And the marmot has crept from his winter sleep,

And the steppe is alive with his whistling cry ;
And the rook has sailed from across the blue deep ;
And the lark, from a little white cloud, fills the
sky ;

And the pike's sent his tail through the spongy
ice ;

And the swallows come flying from Paradise ;
And the cricket's astir ; and the bear in his den
Wakes, yawning, and feels it is Spring among men.

Beautiful Spring !—sing the girls in the street—

Sweet rain of the Spring ! dear blue of the sky !
O rain, pour over the grandfather's wheat,
The maiden's flax, and the grandmother's rye !

O Spring, give the birch her silver chemise,
Give the noble horse-chestnut his gloves of red ;
Bring safely all little birds over the seas—
All little winged souls of the babes that are dead !

Oh, the village is glad 'mid the rustle of wings,
And the fragrance and murmur of growing things !
And all poor mothers with children dead
Spread the piece of white linen with crumbs of
bread

Outside for their birds on the window-sill.
In the dim russet morning when all is still,
They can hear their little ones twitter and sing ;
And they weep, and are solaced, and bless the
Spring !

But Kozma the Smith is weary of life,
And heart-sick with thoughts of his dear dead
wife,
And the little girl-babe who was born and died
On the mother's cold bosom last Whitsuntide.
Heart-sick is Kozma the Smith, as he stands
With a hammer and red-hot bar in his hands,
Gazing on vacancy—thinking he heard
His little one's cry in the cry of a bird.

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And the throat of him aches, and his eyes are red,
As he spreads the linen and crumbles the bread
On the ledge of the window—then lies awake
Listening till day for his little girl's sake.

But his crumbs lie untouched : day slips after day,
And never a little bird takes one away ;
And never at morning, when all is still,
Does *he* hear a chirp on the window-sill !

Then Kozma the Smith lifts his tear-blinded eyes,
With a cry : “ What to me are the green of the
grass,
The flowers and the birds, and the laugh of the
skies,
If the Spring has not brought me my own little
lass ? ”

And Kozma the Smith casts him down with a
groan :
“ Dear wife, dost thou lie in the dark ground
alone ?
Is the little one stolen ? . . . It lay in its place,
All covered with flowers to its sweet waxen face,

When they beat down the nails of the coffin-lid.
Have the water-sprites found where my darling was
hid

In the darkness, dear wife,—in the flowers, at thy
side ? ”

And he thinks in dumb pain how the little one
died—

Unbaptized, unanointed, an outcast from grace !
And Kozma goes forth with a haggard face,
And the light in his eyes is unearthly and
wild—

For he fears the Rusáلكas have taken the child.

In the dead of the night, when the pines on the
hill

Stand asleep in the mist, and the valley is still ;
When the pulses of being so peacefully beat,
One almost can hear the grass grow in the street ;
When the hearthstone is black, and the cricket
asleep,

And the dew hangs in drops on the fleece of the
sheep ;

When the great ruddy moon is just sinking, and
shines

Through the white misty ridge of the topmost
pines—

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In the dead of the night Kozma wakes with a start,
And springs to the window with beating heart ;
Flings it wide—gazes wildly at forest and sky—
And hears—oh, listen !—his little one's cry.

Through the forest the great setting moon smoulders
red,
And the pine-branches lean dusky crimson o'erhead ;
The cold stars glimmer through,—and a long leafy
sigh

Runs before him as Kozma the Smith hurries by.
On the boughs hang the thread and the fluttering
rags

Which the villagers leave for the water-sprite.
With his wild gleaming eyes and blown hair Kozma
speeds,

Till he hears the weird sough of the water-flags,
And sees the marsh-mist trailing ghostly and
white,

And catches among the black pools in the reeds

The glint of a marsh-lamp, the light of a star.

Then he pauses and listens. The wind murmurs by ;

The water-flags moan ; and how faint and how
far—

Oh, hearken once more !—comes the little one's
cry !

The spongy marsh-mosses spirt up from his tread;
The moon has gone down in the mist, round and red;
The great stars dilate, and the blue sky grows dark,
And the weird whispering swamp glooms before
him—when, hark!

From the black reedy water a bird, out of sight,
Sends a bright silvery tinkle of song through the
night;

And for leagues o'er the marshes, beneath the dark sky,
From each bulrush a bird trills a silvery reply.

Then the dusk air is fluttered with flurries of wings,
And jangles of music; and now—oh, behold!—
The morass is on fire with strange stars, floating
rings,

Flaming ribbons of sapphire and scarlet and gold;
And the water-flag trembles with blossoms of fire;
And the bulrush is tufted with clusters of pearls;
And the bird-charm is changed to a fairy choir—

To prattle of children and laughter of girls;
And Kozma the Smith breathes the Holy Name,
As he sees in the circles of flowers and flame
The glittering limbs and the green waving curls,
The blue eyes and white breasts, of the water-girls.
They are combing their hair with a jewelled comb,
They are plucking the brightest lilies in blow,

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They are splashing each other with shiny foam,

They are tossing the water-babes to and fro ;

They are laughing and singing and drifting by—

When he hears through their frolic the little one's
cry.

Then Kozma the Smith, in a voice hoarse and
wild—

“In the name of the Holy One, give me the
child !”

Lo ! a great silence follows that cry of despair.

The revel is hushed ! Not a living thing
Draws a breath in the stillness ; but Kozma's aware

That a garland of rosebuds, a tremulous ring
Of blossomy splendour, is woven and blown

O'er the lit glassy marsh by the water-girls.
And there, with the roses about her strown,

With her tiny head pillowed on emerald curls,
Floats the sweet girl-babe who was born and died
On his wife's cold bosom last Whitsuntide.

Oh, spring through the water-flags, clasp and redeem
Thy little one, Smith, if this be not a dream !

He has sprung : she is saved ! With a low laugh-
ing moan,

“My darling !” he sobs—draws her face to his
own—

When round him rings laughter, derisive and harsh,
And then,—in a flash,—all is black on the marsh !

“ Hilliho, hilliho ! ”—How the clear echoes go
Through the pine-woods, and bring back the shout,
“ Hilliho ! ”

'Tis the hunter halloos, and he clutches his gun
Where the swamp's eerie waters have shrunk in the
sun.

“ Ho, comrades ! be speedy, and come to me
here ! ”—

What is it he sees that a hunter should fear ?

The water-flags flutter their ribbons of green
Round the black peaty marge where the waters
have been.

What is it that lies in the flags—on its face—
And rivets the hunter's fixed gaze to the place ?

110 The Legend of Childhood

“God be thanked, you have come, friends !—The
man !—he is dead !”

The water-flags flutter. With slow fearful tread
They trample the reeds where the dark horror
lies—

Touch the corpse—and then turn the dead face to
the skies.

“God have mercy ! ’tis Kozma the Smith ! He
was missed

In the Spring.—How he clutches those weeds in his
fist !”

The Death of Anaxagoras*

FROM Lampsacus ; at my poor house, and yours.
Of him she banished now let Athens boast ;
Let now th' Athenians raise to him they stoned
A statue ;—*Anaxagoras is dead !*

To you who mourn the Master, called him friend,
Beat back th' Athenian wolves who fanged his
throat,
And risked your own to save him,—Pericles—
I now unfold the manner of his end.

The aged man, who found in sixty years

* “ Lampsacum postea profectus, illic diem suum obiit ; ubi rogantibus eum principibus civitatis, Numquid fieri mandaret, jussisse ferunt ut pueri quotannis quo mense defecisset ludere permetterentur, servarique et hodie consuetudinem.”—DIOG. LAERT., De Vita Philosoph. ; Anaxagoras.

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Scant cause for laughter, laughed before he died
And died still smiling :—Athens vexed him not !
Not he, but your Athenians, he would say,
Were banished in his exile !

When the dawn
First glimmers white o'er Lesser Asia,
And little birds are twittering in the grass,
And all the sea lies hollow and grey with mist,
And in the streets the ancient watchmen doze,
The Master woke with cold. His feet were chill
And reft of sense ; and we who watched him
knew

The fever had not wholly left his brain,
For he was wandering, seeking nests of birds—
An urchin from the green Ionian town
Where he was born. We chafed his clay-cold limbs ;
And so he dozed, nor dreamed, until the sun
Laughed out—broad day—and flushed the garden
gods

Who bless our fruits and vines in Lampsacus.
Feeble, but sane and cheerful, he awoke
And took our hands and asked to feel the sun ;
And where the ilex spreads a gracious shade
We placed him, wrapped and pillowed ; and he
heard

The charm of birds, the social whisper of vines,
The ripple of the blue Propontic sea.

The Death of Anaxagoras 113

Placid and pleased he lay ;—but we were sad
To see the snowy hair and silver beard
Like withering mosses on a fallen oak,
And feel that he, whose vast philosophy
Had cast such sacred branches o'er the fields
Where Athens pastures her dull sheep, lay fallen
And never more should know the spring !

Confess,

You too had grieved to see it, Pericles !
But Anaxagoras owned no sense of wrong ;
And when we called the plagues of all your gods
On your ungrateful city, he but smiled :
“ Be patient, children ! Where would be the gain
Of wisdom and divine astronomy,
Could we not school our fretful minds to bear
The ills all life inherits ? I can smile
To think of Athens ! Were they much to blame ?
Had I not slain Apollo ? Plucked the beard
Of Jove himself ? Poor rabble, who have yet
Outgrown so little the green grasshoppers
From whom they boast descent,—are they to blame ?
How could they dream,—how credit even when
taught—

The sun a red-hot iron ball, in bulk
Not less than Peloponnesus ? How believe
The moon, no silver goddess girt for chace,
But earth and stones, with caverns, hills, and vales ?

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Poor grasshoppers ! who deem the gods absorbed
In all their babble, shrilling in the grass,
What wonder if they rage, should one but hint
That thunder and lightning, born of clashing
 clouds,
Might happen even with Jove in pleasant mood,—
Not thinking of Athenians at all ! ”

He paused ; and blowing softly from the sea,
The fresh wind shook the sibilant ilex-leaves ;
And lying in the shadow, all his mind
O’ershaded by our grief, once more he spoke :—
“ Let not your hearts be troubled ! All my days
Hath all my care been fixed on this vast Blue
So still above us ; now my days are done,
Let It have care of me ! Be patient ; meek ;
Not puffed with doctrine ! Nothing can be
 known ;
Nought grasped for certain ; sense is circumscribed ;
The intellect is weak ; and life is short ! ”
He ceased and mused a little, while we wept.
“ And yet be nowise downcast ; seek, pursue ;
The lover’s rapture and the sage’s gain
Lie in attainment less than in approach.
Look forward to the time which is to come !
All things are mutable ; and change alone

The Death of Anaxagoras 115

Unchangeable. But knowledge grows ! The
 gods

Are drifting from the earth like morning mist ;
The days are surely at the doors when men
Shall see but human actions in the world !
Yea, even these hills of Lampsacus shall be
The isles of some new sea, if time not fail ! ”

And now the reverend fathers of our town
Had heard the Master's end was very near,
And came to do him homage at the close,
And ask what wish of his they might fulfil.
But he, divining that they thought his heart
Might yearn to Athens for a resting-place,
Said gently : “ Nay, from everywhere the way
To that dark land you wot of is the same.
I feel no care ; I have no wish. The Greeks
Will never quite forget my Pericles,
And when they think of him will say of me,
'Twas Anaxagoras taught him ! ’ ”

Loath to go,
No kindly office done, yet once again
The reverend fathers pressed him for a wish.
Then laughed the Master : “ Nay, if still you
 urge,
And since 'twere churlish to reject goodwill,

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I pray you, every year when time brings back
The month in which I left you, let the boys—
All boys and girls in this your happy town—
For that one month be free of task and school.”

He lay back smiling, and the reverend men
Departed, heavy at heart. He spoke no more,
But haply musing on his truant days,
Passed from us, and was smiling when he died.

From Lampsacus thus wrote to Pericles
Agis the Lemnian. How the Master's words,
Wherein he spoke of change unchangeable,
Hold good for things of moment, ill for small !
For lo ! six hundred fateful years have sped
And Greece is but a Roman province now,
Whereas through these six centuries, year by year
When summer and the sun brought back the time,
The lads and lasses, free of school and task,
Have held their revelry in Lampsacus,—
A fact so ripe with grave moralities,
That I, Diogenes, have deemed it fit
To note in my *De Vita et Moribus*.

The God and the Schoolboy

THROUGHOUT the land and sea from ancient days
The wonder had been rumoured, that the god
Born on the radiant hills i' the dazzle of dawn—
Asklepios—healed the sick and raised the dead.
The world gave credence gladly. Human faith
With human anguish grew ; and, doubtless, God
Was pitiful in heaven, when unaware
Of Whom they sought, men called Asklepios.

Thus, four-and-twenty centuries ago,
At Epidaurus, on that rocky point
Washed north and south with violet sea, the sick
Dropped sails. Beyond the cornfields, olive-
groves
And hamlets of the Dusty-feet—for so

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Our townsmen named the rustic folk who tilled
The sweet brown earth 'twixt mountain-cirque and
sea—

A green gorge opened on the beautiful
Still valley in the sunned hills' flowery heart,
Where, throned on gold and ivory, the god—
Chryselephantine, mighty-bearded, ringed
With golden head-rays—held his knotty staff
In one hand, and in one his serpent, wreathed
In shining coils, while near his footstool lay
The first dumb friend man found among the brute.

Oh, marvellous beneath those purple peaks
Glittered the long white marble terrace-walls,
The pillared aisles, the gardens of the god,
The altars white, and white immortal shapes
Half-seen in fragrant bowers where pine and plane
Assuaged with slumberous shade the blaze of
noon.

And hither out of furthest lands and isles
Amid remote dim sea-ways came the blind,
The dumb, the deaf, the palsied, scald, and
maimed—

All loathsome shapes of pain and broken strength

The God and the Schoolboy 119

And hopeless wasting—if perchance the god
Might heal their stricken bodies.

Shafts of stone

Bore of the midnight vision and the cure
Full many a marvellous record. One who came
From far green-gardened Lampsacus the god
Had graciously made whole ; from Halike—
A town whereof none now in all the world
Aught knoweth save the graven name—came
one ;

And one from cold Torone in the north,
From joyous Mytilene one, and one
From that Hermione, whence Hades-ward
So short the downward way that never coin
Is laid upon the dead man's tongue to pay
The ferry of shadows.

But within the shrine

Hung costly gifts of men made glad to live—
Great vases, gems and mirrors ; jewelled eyes,
Fingers of silver, arms and legs of gold ;
Rich models of invaluable parts,
And precious images of fleshly ills
From which no quittance were too highly priced ;

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And, mixed with these, rude gifts of grateful hearts
Whose poverty was not ashamed to give.

Upon a time, among the folk who sought
Surcease of suffering from Asklepios,
Was brought a schoolboy from the white-walled
town

Upon the rocky point—Euphanes, frail,
And fever-flushed, and weak with grievous pain ;
And as the lad, beneath the clement stars,
Lay wandering in his mind, and dreamed perchance
Of sailing little triremes on the shore,
Or making, it might be, a locust-cage
With reeds and stalks of asphodel beneath
The trellised vines, it seemed as though the god
Stood by him in the holy night and spoke :—
“ What wilt thou give me, little playfellow,
If I shall cure thy sickness ? ” And the lad,
Thinking what pleasure schoolboys have in these,
Replied : “ I’ll give thee my ten marbles, god ! ”
Asklepios laughed, right gladdened with the gift,
And said : “ Then, truly, I will make thee well ! ”
And lo ! when morning whitened on the hills,
And in the valley’s dusk the sacred cock
Clapped wings and sang, the urchin went forth
whole !

The God and the Schoolboy 121

Full four-and-twenty centuries ago
Euphanes saw the god ; and yesterday
The pillar bearing record of the cure
Was dug from wreck of war and drift of years.
*" Ten marbles ! quoth the child. Asklepios laughed ;
But on the morrow forth the lad went whole."*
Thus closely had the Greek in ancient times—
Through some prophetic prompting of pure love
God's unfulfilled events divining—drawn
Man's heart unto the human heart in God.

Suspirium

THESE little shoes!—How proud she was of these!
Can you forget how, sitting on your knees,
She used to prattle volubly, and raise
Her tiny feet to win your wondering praise?
Was life too rough for feet so softly shod,
That now she walks in Paradise with God,
Leaving but these—whereon to dote and muse—
These little shoes?

Through the Ages

I

O'ER the swamp in the forest
the sunset is red;
And the sad reedy waters,
in black mirrors spread,
Are aflame with the great crimson tree-tops o'er-
head.

By the swamp in the forest
the oak-branches groan,
As the Savage primeval,
with russet hair thrown
O'er his huge naked limbs, swings his hatchet of
stone.

By the swamp in the forest
sings shrilly in glee
The stark forester's lass
plucking mast in a tree—
And hairy and brown as a squirrel is she!

With the strokes of the flint all
the blind woodland rings,
And the echoes laugh back as
the sylvan girl sings:—
And the Sabre-tooth growls in his lair ere he springs!

Keen as stars, in green splendour
his great eyeballs burn
As he crawls!—Chilled to silence,
the girl can discern
The fierce pantings which thrill through the fronds
of the fern.

And the brown frolic face of
the girl has grown white,
As the large fronds are swayed in
the weird crimson light,
And she sobs with the strained throbbing dumbness
of fright.

With his blue eyes a gleam, and
his wild russet hair
Streaming back, the Man travails,
unwarned, unaware
Of the lithe shape that crouches, the green eyes that
glare.

And now, hark! as he drives with
a last mighty swing
The stone blade of the axe through
the oak's central ring,
From the blanched lips what screams of wild agony
spring!—

There's a rush through the fern-fronds—
a yell of affright—
And the Savage and Sabre-tooth
close in fierce fight.
And the red sunset smoulders and blackens to night.

On the swamp in the forest
one clear star is shown,
And the reeds fill the night with
a long troubled moan—
And the girl sits and sobs in the darkness, alone!

II

The great dim centuries of long ago
Sweep past with rain and fire, with wind and
 snow,
And where the Savage swung his axe of stone
The blue clay silts on Titan trunks o'erthrown,
O'er mammoth's tusks, in river-horse's lair ;
And, armed with deer-horn, clad in girdled hair,
A later savage in his hollow tree
Hunts the strange broods of a primeval sea.

And yet the great dim centuries again
Sweep past with snow and fire, with wind and
 rain
And where that warm primeval ocean rolled
A second forest buds,—blossoms broad,—grows old ;
And a new race of prehistoric men
Springs from the mystic soil, and once again
Fades like a wood mist through the woodlands'
 hoar.

For lo ! the great dim centuries once more
With wind and fire, with rain and snow sweep
 by ;

And where the forest stood, an empty sky
Arches with lonely blue a lonely land.
The great white stilted storks in silence stand
Far from each other, motionless as stone,
And melancholy leagues of marsh-reeds moan,
And dead tarns blacken 'neath the mournful blue.

The ages speed ! And now the skin canoe
Darts with swift paddle through the drear morass,
But ere the painted fisherman can pass,
The brazen horns ring out ; a thund'rous throng—
Bronzed faces, tufted helmets—sweeps along,
The silver Eagles flash and disappear
Across the Roman causeway !

Year by year

The dim time lapses till that vesper hour
Broods o'er the summer lake with peaceful
power,
When the carved galley through the sunset floats,
The rowers, with chains of gold about their
throats,
Hang on their dripping oars, and sweet and clear
The sound of singing steals across the mere,
And rising with glad face and outstretched hand,
“ Row, Knights, a little nearer to the land,

And let us hear these monks of Ely sing ; ”
Says KNUT, the King.

In the dim years what fateful hour arrives,
And who is this rides Fenward from St. Ives ?
A man of massive presence,—bluff and stern.
Beneath their craggy brows his deep eyes burn
With awful thoughts and purposes sublime.
The face is one to abash the front of time,—
Hewn of red rock, so vital, even now
One sees the wart above that shaggy brow.
At Ely there in these idyllic days
His sickles reap, his sheep and oxen graze,
And all the ambition of his sober life
Is but to please Elizabeth his wife,
To drain the Fens—and magnify the Lord.
So in his plain cloth suit, with close-tucked sword,
OLIVER CROMWELL, fated but unknown,
Rides where the Savage swung his axe of stone.

III

In the class-room blue-eyed Phemie
Sits, half listening, hushed and dreamy,
To the grey-haired pinched Professor droning to
his class of girls.

And around her in their places
Rows of arch and sweet young faces
Seem to fill the air with colour shed from eyes and
lips and curls !—

Eyes of every shade of splendour,
Brown and bashful, blue and tender,
Grey and giddy, black and throbbing with a deep
impassioned light :

Golden ringlets, raven clusters,
Auburn braids with sunny lustres
Falling on white necks, plump shoulders clothed in
green and blue and white.

And the sun with leafy reflex
Of the rustling linden-tree flecks
All the glass doors of the cases ranged along the
class-room wall—

Flecks with shadow and gold the Teacher's
Thin grey hair and worn pinched features,
And the pupil's heads, and sends a thrill of July
over all.

And the leafy golden tremor
Witches so the blue-eyed dreamer
That the room seems filling straightway with a
forest green and old ;

And the grey Professor's speech is
Heard like wind among the beeches
Murmuring wondrous cosmic secrets never quite
distinctly told ;

And the girls around seemed turning
Into tree—laburnums burning,
Graceful ashes, silver birches—but through all the
glamour and change

Phemie is conscious that those cases
Hold reliques of vanished races,
The pre-Adamitic fossils of a dead world grim and
strange.

Labelled shells suggest the motion,
Moan, and glimmer of that ocean
Where the belemnites dropped spindles and the
sand-stars shed their rays ;

Through the Ages 131

Monstrous birds stalk stilted by as
She perceives the slab of Trias
Scrawled with hieroglyphic claw-tracks of the
mesozoic days ;

And before her she sees dawn a
Pageant of an awful fauna
While across Silurian ages the Professor's lecture
blows.

All the while a soft and pleasant
Rustle of dresses, an incessant
Buzz of smothered frolic rises underneath his meagre
nose.

And one pretty plague has during
All the class been caricaturing
Her short-sighted good old Master with a world of
wicked zest ;

And the madcaps blush and titter
As they see the unconscious sitter
Sketched as Allophylian Savage—spectacled but
much undressed.

But the old man turns the pages
Of the rock-illuminated ages,
Tracing from earth's mystic missal the antiquity of
Man :

*Not six thousand years—but eras,
Ages, eons disappear as
Groping back we touch the system where the Human
first began.*

*Centuries, as we retrogress, are
Dwarfed to days, says the Professor,
And our lineage was hoary ere Eve's apple-tree grew
green ;*

*For the Bee, whose drowsy humming
Was prophetic of Man's coming,
Lies in gem-like tomb of amber, buried in the
Miocene.*

*At what point Man came, I know not,
Logic proves not, fossils show not,
But his dim remote existence is a fact beyond
dispute.*

Look!—And from among some thirty
Arrow barbs of quartz and chert he
Takes the flint head of a hatchet,—and the girls
grow hushed and mute.

*Old, he says, art thou strange stone ! Nor
Less antique thy primal owner !
When the Fens were drained this axe was found below
two forests sunk.*

*Underneath a bed of sea clay
And two forests this relique lay
Where some Allophylian Savage left it in a half-hewn
trunk !*

Does the old Professor notice
Large eyes, blue as myosotis,
Raised to him in startled wonder as those fateful
words are said ?

But for Phemie, through the trees in
Her dream forest, fact and reason
Blend with fancy, and her vision grows complete
and clear and dread :

By the swamp in the forest
the sylvan girl sings

As his flint-headed hatchet
the wild Woodman swings,

But the hatchet cleaves fast in the trunk he has
riven—

The Man stands unarmed as the Sabre-tooth
springs !

An Indian Cowrie*

A GENTLE creature grew
Within this cell of pearly blue—
How many centuries ago
No seer can tell us. We can only know
It found life pleasant, moved, and took its ease
By palmy island shores in distant Indian seas.

The world has changed since then !
Tongues have died out ; and tribes of men
Have clamoured, and have passed away
Like crow-flights through the sunset of a day ;
No pillar marks where gorgeous cities fell ;
But this small speechless life hath left its storied
shell.

* Found in a Cornish barrow at the Land's End.

What matters now to seek
How man in that dim dawn antique
First owned it; whether fisher spread
His snare of palm-tree leaves and baited thread,
Or leaf-girt negress, whistling in her speech,
Gathered an empty husk upon a tangled beach?

It profits not; and yet,
Methinks, some cave-dwarf, carved in jet,
With blubber lips and woolly hair,
Wagged a huge head, as at some Aryan fair,
He bartered for a shred, a copper bead,
This shell, whose story is a world's, could we but
read.

How many a kindred hand
Hath, as it passed from land to land,
Touched it, and left a pulse to thrill
The Aryan blood which leaps within us still;
What memories of all that then befell
Are, like an Iliad, shut within this little shell!

Apply it to your ear,
And listen!—No, you cannot *hear*;

Yet how the arrow-heads of stone
Sang; how the bronze swords rang; how shriek
and groan
Follow the stone celt's thud, as wave by wave,
The Aryan exodus for ever westward drave!

For ever westward! New
Wild worlds still opened; but the Blue
That brooded o'er them was the same
Unchanging God that brooded whence they came.
For ever westward! And the shell was cast
Westward; and great fresh waves still swept beyond
the last.

Across the infinite plains
White cattle draw the lumbering wains;
Huge lop-eared mastiffs guard and keep
The silky goats and heavy horned sheep;
Dark lines of life crawl where the great lakes shine,
And close against the sunset creeps a fainter line.

The rosy peaks of snow
Arise, and like a pageant go;
Primeval forest, pathless fen,
Dragons, and hordes of brutal-visaged men

Fleet past; and ever where the dark lines turn,
In sudden fields of wheat the scarlet poppies burn.

Hark! in the dead of night,
What cries are these? What crimson light
Leaps o'er the mere, and redly streaks
The snowy pine-wood and the icy peaks?
What splashing paddles these?—The morn will
break
On tree-piled hovels smouldering in an Alpine lake.

Still westward! And the sun,
Burning o'er Jutland, has begun
To bleach the many-cycled firs!
A fresher life-sap through the forest stirs,
And tall and green the little oaks have grown
Round the Bronze Man at death-grips with the
Man of Stone!

What year was it that blew
The Aryan's wicker-work canoe
Which brought the shell to English land?
What prehistoric man or woman's hand,
With what intent, consigned it to this grave—
This barrow set in sound of the Ancient World's
last wave?

Beside it in the mound
A charmed bead of flint was found.
Some woman surely in this place,
Covered with flowers a little baby-face,
And laid the cowrie on the cold dead breast;
And, weeping, turned for comfort to the landless
West?

Was it a jewel meant
To mark deep love or high descent;
A many-virtued amulet;
A sign to know the child by when they met;
A coin for that last journey through the night—
A coin of little worth, a childless widow's mite?

No man shall ever know !
It happened all so long ago
That this bereaved woman may
Have stood upon the cliffs around the bay
And watched for tin-ships that no longer came,
Nor knew that Carthage had gone down in Roman
flame.

The Latter Law

I

WHEN, schooled to resignation, I had ceased
To yearn for my lost Eden ; when I knew
No loving Spirit brooded in the blue,
And none should see His coming in the East,
I looked for comfort in my creed ; I sought
To draw all nature nearer, to replace
The sweet old myths, the tenderness, the grace
Of God's dead world of faith and reverent thought.

Oh, joy! I found the stern new Law reveal
Romance more rare than poesy creates :
Your blood, it said, is kindred with the sap
Which throbs within the cedar, and mayhap
In some dim wise the tree reciprocates,
Even as a Dryad, all the love you feel !

II

You and the great glad Earth are kith and kin,
There is one base, one scheme of life, one
hope

On that and this side of the microscope.
All things, now wholes, have parts of many been,
And all shall be. A disk of Homer's blood
May redden a daisy on an English lawn,
And what was Chaucer glimmer in the dawn
To-morrow o'er the plains where Ilion stood.

No jot is lost, or scorned, or disallowed ;
One Law reigns over all. Take you no care,
For while all beings change one life endures,
And a new cycle waits for you and yours
To melt away, like streaks of morning cloud,
Into the infinite azure of things that were.

III

And soon the selfish clinging unto sense,
The longing that this ME should never fail,
Loosed quivering hands, for oh ! of what avail
Were such survival of intelligence,

If all the great and good of days gone by—

Plato, Hypatia, Shakespeare—had surceased,

Had mingled with the cloud, the plant, the beast,
And God were but a mythos of the sky?

And when I thought, o'ershadowed with strange awe,

How Christ was dead—had ceased in utter woe,

With that great cry "Forsaken!" on the cross,

I felt at first a sense of bitter loss,

And then grew passive, saying, "Be it so!

'Tis one with Christ and Judas. 'Tis the law!"

IV

But when my child, my one girl-babe lay dead—

The blossom of me, my dream and my desire—

And unshed tears burned in my eyes like fire,

And when my wife subdued her sobs, and said :

Oh! husband, do not grieve, be comforted,

She is with Christ!—I laughed in my despair.

With Christ! O God! and where is Christ,
and where

My poor dead babe? And where the countless
dead?

The great glad Earth—my kin!—is glad as though
No child had ever died ; the heaven of May
Leans like a laughing face above my grief.
Is *she* clean lost for ever ? How shall I know ?
O Christ ! art thou still Christ ? And shall I
pray
For unbelief or fulness of belief ?

Vignettes

The Wanderer

I

I MET a waif i' the hills at close of day.
He begged an alms ; I thought to say him
 nay.
What was he ? “Sir, a little dust,” said he,
“Which life blows up and down, and death will
 lay.”

I gave—for love of beast and hill and tree,
And all the dust that has been and shall be.

II

He knows no home ; he only knows
Hunger and cold and pain ;
The four winds are his bedfellows ;
His sleep is dashed with rain.

'Tis nought to him who fails, who thrives ;
He neither hopes nor fears ;
Some dim primeval impulse drives
His footsteps down the years.

He could not, if he would, forsake
Lone road and field and tree.
Yet, think ! it takes a God to make
E'en such a waif as he.

The Stone Age

'T WAS not a vision ! Yet the oak
O'erarched the paleolithic Age ;
And homesteads of a pigmy folk
Were clustered 'neath its foliage.

Secreted in that sylvan space,
To archæologist unknown,
Stood, reared by some untutored race,
Strange rings and avenues of stone.

The little thorp deserted seemed ;
What prey had lured the tribe afar ?
One figure, lingering, sat and dreamed,
As lonely as the evening star.

Bright-haired, blue-eyed, with naked feet,
And young face lit with rosy blood,
She rocked her babe, and dreamed the sweet
Primeval dream of motherhood.

A wondrous babe, that once had grown
A branch among the branches green—
For nurslings of the Age of Stone
Are mainly bairns of wood, I ween.

A mother strangely young, and sage
Beyond the summers she had told,
For mothers of that ancient Age
Are usually five years old.

God bless thy heart maternal, bless
Thy bower of stone, thy sheltering tree,
Thou small prospective ancestress
Of generations yet to be !

The Haunted Bridge

WITH high-pitched arch, low parapet,
And narrow thoroughfare, it stands
As strong as when the mortar set
Beneath the Roman mason's hands.

An ancient ivy grips its walls,
Tall grasses tuft its coping-stones ;
Beneath, through citron shadow, falls
The stream in drowsy undertones.

No road leads hence. The stonechat flits
Along green fallow grey with stone ;
But here a dark-eyed urchin sits,
To whom the Painted Men were known.

The Haunted Bridge

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Hush ! do not move, but only look.

When sunny days are long and fine
This Roman truant baits a hook,
Drops o'er the keystone here a line,

And, dangling sandalled feet, looks down

To see the swift trout dart and gleam—
Or scarcely see them, hanging brown
With heads against the clear brown stream.

The Scarecrow

HAIL Goodman-gossip of the corn !
When boughs are green and furrows sprout
And blossom muffles every thorn,
Poor soul ! the farmer boards him out.

Men think, grim wight, his rags affright
The wingèd thieves from root and ear ;
But on his hat pert sparrows light—
Crows have been friends too long to fear !

The schoolboy's sling he heedeth not ;
No rancour nerves those palsied hands ;
In shocking hat and ancient coat,
A crazed and patient wretch he stands.

Without a murmur in the wheat,
 Till fields are shorn and harvest's won,
 He suffers cold, he suffers heat,
 From chilly stars and scorching sun.

Though men forget, he dreameth yet
 How in the golden past he stood,
 'Mid flowers and wine, a shape divine
 Of marble or of carven wood ;

How, in the loveliness and peace
 Of that blithe age and radiant clime,
 He was a garden-god of Greece.
 Oh, vanished world ! Oh, fleeting time !

Gaunt simulacrum—ghost forlorn—
 Grey exile from a splendid past—
 Last god (in rags) of a creed outworn—
 If pity'll help thee, mine thou hast !

January and June

WHEN thatch and tile are jagged with spar,
And every brook to crystal turns,
The frost that cracks the water-jar
Fills window-panes with flowers and ferns.

When flocks upon the hills are lost,
And snow-wreaths block the carrier's wain,
With silvery flowers and ferns the frost
Fills every misted window-pane.

When cold has stopped the cricket's tune,
And ice-bound clocks forget the hours,
The frost, as though it dreamed of June,
Fills all the panes with ferns and flowers.

When June returns with flowers and ferns
It also dreams,—for rocks are mossed
With furry rime, and, as it turns,
Each willow-leaf seems hoar with frost.

But agrimony in the hedge
Most wintrily recalls the time
When urchins climbed the window-ledge
To thaw the flowers and ferns of rime.

Green Pastures

WHEN springing meads are freshly dight,
And trees new-leafed throw scarce a
shadow,

The green earth shows no fairer sight
Than soft-eyed kine and blowing meadow.

Too calm for care, too slow for mirth,
Amid the shower, amid the gleam,
The great mild mother-creatures seem
Half-waking forms o' the dreamy earth.

And down the pathway through the grass
To school the merry children pass,
Singing a rhyme in the April morns,
How—*There's red for the furrows, and white for the
daisies,*
Brown eyes for the brooks, for the trees crumpled horns!

When quivering leaves, and oes of light
Between the leaves, the deep sward dapple,
When may-boughs cream in curdling white,
And maids envè the bloom o' the apple,
The great mild mother-creatures lie,
And grow, in absence of the sun,
One with the moon and stars, and one
With silvery cloud and darkest sky.

And down the pathway through the grass
To school the merry children pass,
Singing a rhyme in the morns of June,
How—*There's white for the cloudlets, and black for the
darkness,
And two polished horns for the sweet sickle moon.*

A Bird's Flight

FROM some bright cloudlet dropping ;
From branch to blossom hopping ;
Then drinking from a small brown stone
That stood alone
Amid the brook ; then, singing,
Upspringing,
It soared : my bird had flown.

A glimpse of beauty only
That left the glen more lonely ?
Nay, truly ; for its song and flight
Made earth more bright !
If men were less regretful
And fretful,
Would life yield less delight ?

Fairy Heavens

HAVE you seen the forest-pool
In the summer? Clear and cool,
Glassing, 'mid the trees it lies,
Silvery clouds and sapphire skies.

When in windless August days
Not a ripple o'er it plays,
One can almost think he sees
Through to the Antipodes.

Mirrored reeds must scarcely know
Whether up or down they grow;
And the trees doubt whether they're
Crystal-washed or parched in air.

Brindled Crummie on the brink
Pauses as she stoops to drink ;
When she drinks, she drinks for two—
'Tis a wondrous thing to do !

Swallows, flashing to and fro,
Strike the water as they go—
Hawking insects ? Not a fly ;
Only puzzled with that sky.

East and west, and north and south
Have they flown from dearth and drouth :
'Twould, indeed, be sweet and strange
Through those nether heavens to range !

Puff !—a sudden whiff of air
Stars the mirror everywhere.
Myriad ripples, gemmed and curled,
Have annulled a fairy world.

Any clown in summer may
View these marvels day by day ;
Day by day we pass them by
With an undelighted eye.

Were they seen but once an age,
Princes would make pilgrimage
To the happy hallowed ground
Where these double heavens were found !

Day - Dreams

BROAD August burns in milky skies,
The world is blanched with hazy heat ;
The vast green pasture, even, lies
Too hot and bright for eyes and feet.

The dark boughs of a hundred years,
The emerald foliage of one,
Amid the grassy level rears
The sycamore against the sun.

Lulled in a dream of shade and sheen,
Within the clement twilight thrown
By that great cloud of floating green,
A horse is standing, still as stone.

He stirs nor head nor hoof, although
The grass is fresh beneath the branch ;
His tail alone swings to and fro
In graceful curves from haunch to haunch.

He stands quite lost, indifferent
To rack or pasture, trace or rein ;
He feels the vaguely sweet content
Of perfect sloth in limb and brain.

The Weir

WHERE mossy boulders make a weir,
The brook's brown water is so clear
One sees each small brown stone within
Distinctly, when the sun is in.

But when the sun's out, 'tis a glass
Filled full of leaves and boughs, with grass
At edge, and here and there a bit
Of cloud or sky deep down in it.
Deep down the blue sky seems to be;
The poor brown stones you cannot see.

When little puffs of coolness make
The water warp, the foliage shake,

A thousand trees seem dancing up
From darkness in the crystal cup.

With soul for water, sense for weir,
Man sees his mortal image here.
He counts each poor brown stone within
Distinctly, when his sun is in.
With Heaven to help, he feels no less
Unfathomed depths of loveliness.

On the Shore

Not lonely though alone, she played
Between the sea and land ;
With shells and meadow-flowers she made
A garden in the sand.

In silvery visions from the sea
The summer clouds were blown ;
Sweet voices came from field and tree,
Soft sounds from wave and stone.

She heeded not ; she lived apart ;
Absorbed in joy she played.
Between two worlds her little heart
A little world had made.

Ah ! we too on the shore, dear child,
Are dreamers all, like thee !
By figments of the heart beguiled,
We cannot hear or see.

Soft voices call from sea and land,
But neither world is ours ;
Our lives are spent on barren sand
And plots of rootless flowers.

The Foreigner *

AMONG the ballast hills he creeps,
Frail, aged, and alone.
Exile feels lighter on these heaps
Of foreign earth and stone.

The blue sea freshens ; ships go by,
Each sail with glamour dressed ;
He looks, and marks the flags they fly,
Then turns him to his quest.

What seeks he here, from hour to hour,
Along this littered strand ?
What but some common Spanish flower,
Scarce prized in his own land !

* The ballast hills or banks are formed of the stones, shingle, &c., brought from outland ports by ships unfreighted. Many foreign weeds and wild flowers find in this way a settlement on our shores.

The Foreigner

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He finds a many on the hills,
 Poor soul, in sun and rain ;
And so his window pots he fills
 With tiny fields of Spain.

Woodland Windows

WHERE tall green elm-trees in a row
Their boughs in Gothic arches pleach
Two foliage-fretted lancets show
A warm blue sea, a summer beach.

One lancet holds a sunset sky,
And, where the glassy ripple rolls,
An old man hanging nets to dry
In brown loops from the trestled poles.

And one, a patch with wild flowers gay,
A shoal where green sea-ribbons float,
And two bright sunburnt tots at play
Beside an upturned fishing-boat.

Woodland Windows 169

Within the woodland's pillared shade,
I seem from some dim aisle to see
That shore by whose blue waters played
The little lads of Zebedee.

Sea Pictures

I

BLITHE morning ; sun and sea ! Zone beyond
zone,
Blue frolic waves and gold clouds softly blown.
One half the globe a sapphire glass which swings
Doubling the sun.

No sail. No wink of wings.
No haze of land.
Look ! who comes wafted here—
What lone yet all unfearful mariner ?
You cannot see him ? No ; he mocks the sight—
Mid such immensities so mere a mite.

Look close ! That tiniest speck of brownish red,
Perched on his single subtle spider-thread !

Trust, little aeronaut, thy filmy sail.
Blow wind ! the reef and palm-tree shall not fail.

II

ENORMOUS sea ; immeasurable night !
The shoreless waters, heaving spectral-white,
Vibrate with showers and chains of golden sparks.

The black boat leaves a track of flame. Beneath
Run trails of blazing emerald, where the sharks
Cross and re-cross. In many a starry wreath
Innumerable medusæ shine and float.

Great luminaries, through the blue-green air,
Gleam on the face of one who slowly dies.
All through the night two cavernous glazed eyes
Look blankly upward in a rigid stare.

O Father in heaven, he cannot speak Thy name ;
Take pity for the sake of Christ, Thy son !
There is no answer, none. No answer, none.

Crossing, re-crossing underneath the boat,
The lean sharks weave their web of emerald flame.

Love and Labour

AT noon he seeks a grassy place
Beneath the hedgerow from the heat ;
His wife sits by, with happy face,
And makes his homely dinner sweet.

Upon her lap their baby lies,
Rosy and plump and stout of limb—
With two great blue unwinking eyes
Of stolid wonder watching him.

The trees are swooning in the heat ;
No bird has heart for song or flight ;
The fiery poppy in the wheat
Droops, and the blue sky aches with light.

He empties dish, he empties can ;
He coaxes baby till she crows ;
Then rising up a strengthened man,
He blithely back to labour goes.

His hammer clinks through glare and heat—
With little thought and well content
He toils and splits for rustic feet
Fragments of some old continent.

Homeward he plods, his travail o'er,
Through sunset lanes, past fragrant farms,
Till—glimpse of heaven !—his cottage-door
Frames baby in her mother's arms.

A Russian Gun

THREE lime-trees, full of drowsy sound
And dreamy shadow edged with sun ;
Amid the trees a grassy mound ;
Upon the mound a Russian gun.

And on the black and massy ring
Which bound the cannon's murderous throat
A little bird had folded wing,
And shook out crystal note on note.

The ripe corn shimmered in the heat
About the red-roofed country town ;
And in the silence, clear and sweet,
That one glad voice trilled up and down

In artless rapture. As I stood,
I thought of all the waste of life,
The squandered gold, the tears of blood,
The folly of that Crimean strife.

The blithe notes seemed to mock mankind !
Had nations made the planet ring,
That some small English bird might find
A perch whereon to sit and sing ?

The Brook

O^F the Brook the Hazels said,
As they whispered on the brink :
“ Was there ever, do you think,
Such a bright and nut-brown maid ? ”

Said the Brook : “ No shadow grows
On the moorlands whence I came ;
All the sky's one sapphire flame,
So I'm sunburnt, I suppose ! ”

Pine and Palm

A LONELY tree, the rowan grew
Among the boulders ; long and lone,
The wild moor heaved beneath the blue
In heathery swells of turf and stone.

They'd wandered east, they'd wandered west,
With dance and music, song and mirth,
That sunburned group who paused to rest
On that one spot of shadowy earth.

With heat and travel overcome,
The bandsman slumbered. On the grass
Lay leathern pipes and cymballed drum,
And bright peaked hat with bells of brass.

With low soft laughs and whispered fun,
Blithe eyes and lips of loving red,
Two girls sat stringing in the sun
The rowan-berries on a thread.

Against a boulder mossy-grown
I saw the singing-woman lean
Her dark proud head. Upon the stone
She had placed her gilded tambourine.

Though not asleep, she did but seem
Half conscious, for the hot sun kissed
Her cheek, and wrapped her heart in dream,
Like some glad garden wrapped in mist.

Into the tambourine I dropped
My modest tribute unto art ;
The children, threading berries, stopped ;
The woman wakened with a start.

She rose and thanked me, bright and free,
Then added : " God is good to-day !
One hour I am in Napoli——
And this is Scotland—far away ! "

And I remembered, as I turned,
How, lone in Norland snows, the pine
Dreamed of that lonely palm which yearned
On burning crags beneath the line.

Twilight Memories

I HEARD at twilight on the bridge
The plover's melancholy cry;
The moorland reared a sullen ridge
Against the amber evening sky.

No farm-light cheered the deepening grey
Of those vast sweeps of heath and stone ;
The sky seemed far—so far away ;
My heart felt utterly alone.

And as when summer rain is done
A shower is shaken by a gust
From some sad tree, although the sun
Has long since dried the ground to dust,

Even so within my mournful mind
I felt my manhood's greener years
Shaken by fitful gusts of wind,
Which filled my eyes with ancient tears.

And whilst in pleasant pain I wooed
Old dreams, lost hopes, vain yearnings back,
Two figures on the sky-line stood,
Clear cut from head to foot in black.

Cut clear against the amber glow,
They stood together hand in hand—
A man and woman—did they know
How near to heaven they seemed to stand?

That dark ridge seemed the world's end; they
The last of lovers. Side by side
They gazed;—what radiant prospect lay
Beyond them, unto me denied?

He draws her close; her arms are twined
About his neck!—Oh, happy years,
Now shaken by this woful wind
Which fills my eyes with ancient tears!

In the Shadow

NIGHT is the shadow of the Earth, but we
Lose the fine sense through use, nor thank
nor praise.

In the hot summer's blue and windless days
Sweet is the grass and dear the shadowing tree,
Whence, stretched at ease, we watch with languid
look
Birds, insects, flowers, the cloud, the nut-brown
brook.

But all the year and feverish day by day
Earth shadows us ; the burden and the heat
Are lifted from us ; sweet is night, and sweet
The stars and silvery clouds, and Milky Way.
Use teaches thankfulness a sinful thrift ;
We prize the casual, slight the constant gift.

Green Sky

GREY on the linden leaves ;
Green in the west ;
Under our gloaming eaves
Swifts in the nest ;
Over the mother a human roof ;
Over the fledglings a breast !

In the Fall

A MONG the bleak, wet woods I tread
On leaves of yellow and of red ;
The leaves are whirled in wind and
rain,
The woods are filled with sounds of
pain ;
No bird is left to sing.

Man's destiny is blowing wind,
A little leaf is all mankind ;
The wind blows high, the wind blows low,
The leaflet flutters to and fro,
And dreams it is a wing.

Amid the blowing of the wind,
Amid the drifting of mankind,
Among the melancholy rain,
And woodlands filled with sounds of pain,
No heart is left to sing.

The Little Dipper

LITTLE Dipper, piping sweet
in the shrewd mid-winter weather ;
Nesting in the linn, where spray
splashes nest and sprinkles feather ;

'Neath the fringes of the ice,
down the burn-side, blithely diving ;
Piping, piping with full throat,—
bite the frost or be snow driving ;

Life's white winter comes apace ;
oh, but gaily shall I bide it
If my bosom, like thy nest,
house a singing-bird inside it !

In the Hills

His hoar breath stings with rime the skater's
face.

Mirrored in jet, beneath his hissing feet,

The stars swarm past, and radiate, as they fleet,

The immemorial cold of cosmic space.

Nature's Magic

GIVE her the wreckage of strife—
Tumulus, tumbled tower,
The clod and the stone she'll make her own
With the grass and innocent flower.

Give her the Candlemas snow,
Smiling she'll take the gift,
And out of the flake a snowdrop make,
And a lambkin out of the drift.

Flower Fancies

ERE blossom time had yet begun,
When grass scarce hid the brown earth's
 leanness,
And fagot hedgerows in the sun
 Were slowly kindling into greenness,

I met a maiden, small and fair,
 Along the cheerless highway bringing
Such flowery boughs as mortal ne'er
 Hath seen from earthly tree-trunk springing.

Too eager to await the pledge
 Of skies so fickle, trees so lazy,
She had broken thorn-sticks from the hedge,
 And tipped each prickly with a daisy.

Oh, little maid, whose pretty skill
Turns March to May so well and quickly,
Teach *me* thy craft !—my wayward will
Hath_ made life's very daisies prickly.

Beyond

A DARKENING sky is at my back ;
Gaunt woods my westward path oppose,
But every bough is freaked in black
Against a heaven of gold and rose.

'Tis leafless March, and bitter cold ;
But those stark branches, furred with ice,
Blend in that glow of rose and gold
Like blossomy bowers of Paradise.

Oh, Life, when all thy bloom and shade
Are stripped, and age-chilled hearts despond,
How beautiful thou mayst be made
By one bright glimpse of heaven beyond !

The Crow

WITH rakish eye and plenished crop,
Oblivious of the farmer's gun,
Upon the naked ash-tree top
The Crow sits basking in the sun.

An old ungodly rogue, I wot !
For, perched in black against the blue,
His feathers, torn with beak and shot,
Let woful glints of April through.

The year's new grass, and, golden-eyed,
The daisies sparkle underneath,
And chestnut trees on either side
Have opened every ruddy sheath.

But doubtful still of frost and snow,
The ash alone stands stark and bare,
And on its topmost twig the Crow
Takes the glad morning's sun and air.

By Moonlight

A FOOT at midnight. All the way
Is warm and sweet with scents of May.

The cocks are crowing hours too soon,
The dogs are barking far and near,
The frogs are croaking round the mere ;
And in a tree the naked Moon
Is crouching down, as though she would
Her silvery-bosomed maidenhood
Conceal among the leaves, too thin
And small to hide her beauty in.

Dear Moon, 'tis I, thy friend—who pray
Thy company upon my way.

Cockcrow

WHEN nights are short in early June,
We, risen betimes, shall haply see
The silver sickle of the moon
Hang gleaming in an eastern tree.

Poised in the dawn's pure silver-grey,
Blue clouds shall wait the gold and red,
While pallid star-flakes melt away
In cold, clear azure overhead.

The dim brown fields shall seem to sleep
Self-shadowed ; mist shall here and there
Lie white in pools, where dewlap-deep
Great kine shall loom i' the twilight air.

Where trees in hazy blue embower
Some distant farm, a sudden cock
Shall crow ; and faint from city tower
Shall float the chimes of three o'clock.

Then from the meadow, sweet and loud,
The morning star of song shall spire,
And morn shall burst through sky and cloud
In one vast flowerage of fire.

Oh, revelling skylark, sing and soar,
Rose-winged, rose-bosomed, o'er the morn !
But chanticleer and we, once more
Must scratch the world for gems and corn.

Anno Domini

The Shepherd Beautiful

OFT as I muse on Rome—and at her name
Out of the darkness, flushed with blood and
gold,
Smoulders and flashes on her seven-fold
height
The imperial, murderous, harlot Rome of old,
Rome of the lions, Rome of the awful light
Where “living torches” flame—
I thread in thought the Catacombs’ blind maze,
Marvelling how men could then draw happy
breath,
And cheer these sunless labyrinths of death
With one sweet dream of Christ told many ways.

The Shepherd Beautiful 199

The Shepherd Beautiful ! O good and sweet,
O Shepherd ever lovely, ever young,
Was it because they gathered at Thy feet,
Because upon Thy pastoral pipe they hung,
That they were happy in those evil days,
That these grim crypts were arched with
heavenly blue,
And spaced in verdurous vistas lit with
streams ?
Ah, let me count the ways,
Fair Shepherd of the world, in which they
drew
Thee in that most divine of human dreams.

They limned Thee standing near the wattled
shed,
The strayed sheep on Thy shoulders, and the
flock
Bleating fond welcome. Seasons of the
year—
Spring gathering roses swung athwart the
rock,
Summer and Autumn, one with golden ear
And one with apple red,
And shrivel'd Winter burning in a heap

Dead leaves—they pictured round Thee ; for
they said,

“All the year round”—and joyous tears were
shed—

“All the year round, Thou, Shepherd, lov’st Thy
sheep.”

Sometimes they showed Thee piping in the
shade

Music so sweet each mouth was raised from
grass

And ceased to hunger. In some dewy glade

Where the cool waters ran as clear as glass,
To this or that one Thou would’st seem to say,

“Thou’st made me glad, be happy thou in
turn !”

And sometimes Thou would’st sit in weariness—

My Shepherd ! “*quærens me*
Sedisti lassus”—while Thy dog would yearn,
Eyes fixed on Thee, aware of Thy distress.

So limned they Christ ; and bold, yet not too
bold,

Smiled at the tyrant’s torch, the lion’s cry ;

The Shepherd Beautiful 201

So nursed the child-like heart, the angelic
mind,

Goodwill to live, and fortitude to die,

And love for men, and hope for all mankind.

One Shepherd and one fold !

Such was their craving ; none should be forbid ;

All—all were Christ's ! And so they drew once
more

The Shepherd Beautiful. But now He bore

No lamb upon His shoulders—just a kid.

And on His shoulders not a lamb, a kid

He Arnold

“Trees of Righteousness”

C HAINED to the dungeon-wall she slept.
Rome, moonlit, revelled overhead.
She heard not. She had prayed and wept,
Haggard with anguish, wild with dread.

She was too fair, too young to die ;
Life was too sweet, and home too dear !
God touch'd her with His sleep : a sigh—
And she had ceased to weep or fear !

She slept, and, sleeping, seemed awake :
A fair Child held her virgin hand ;
They walk'd by an enchanted lake ;
They walk'd in a celestial land.

“Trees of Righteousness” 203

One thing she saw, and one she heard.

There were a thousand red-rose trees ;
Each rose-red leaf sang like a bird.

“What trees, dear Child,” she asked, “are
these ? ”

“These,” said the Child, “are called Love’s
Bower ;

They fade not ; constantly they sing ;
Each flower appears more fire than flower.

Now, see the roots from which they spring ! ”

She looked ; she saw, far down the night,

The earth, the city whence she came,
And Nero’s gardens red with light—
The light of martyrs wrapped in flame.

She woke with Heaven still in her eyes.

Rome, moonlit, revelled overhead.
She feared no more the lions’ cries ;
Flames were but flowers, and death was dead !

At St. Gall, A.D. 850

WITHOUT a slip, without a blot,
The monk transcribed with loving care
What treasured text it matters not,
Of homily or prayer.

And as he toiled, with sudden thrill,
From bough of beech or spire of pine,
A blackbird with his golden bill
Fluted a strain divine.

The busy fingers ceased to write ;
But, while the blackbird sung,
The monk found rhymes for his delight
In Erin's witching tongue ;

And penned them thus, with starry look
And simple heart aglow,
Upon the margin of his book,
A thousand years ago :

“ Great woods and high do ring me round :
Now, from my pages closely lined,
A blackbird with angelic sound
Distracts my gladdened mind.

“ Most sweet he sings upon the tree,
Concealed among the leaves of green ;
May God take equal joy in me—
So love me, too, unseen ! ”

The Door in Heaven

“**O**^H Lord, Thy child who went astray
Comes weeping back to Thee once more;
I see him hastening on his way;
How shall I greet him?” “Close the door;

“Yea, close it ruthless in his face,
With clash and clang of bolts within!
There let him beat, and plead for grace,
Till he has purged away his sin.”

“Oh Lord, thy child who twice has sinned
Comes slowly back, with broken cries
Blown down the outer dark and wind;
Far off, he dares not lift his eyes.

“What wilt Thou?” “Set the door ajar,
And let a lamp shine, fixed and clear,
Thro’ dark and anguish, like a star,
To give him courage to draw near.”

“Lord God, dost Thou remember still
Him who thrice laughed Thy love to scorn
Thro’ years of shame and nameless ill?
Now comes he naked and forlorn.

“Now that his evil day is done,
To Thee he turns, who scoffed of yore.
What wilt Thou, Lord, with such a one?
Shall not Thy saints make fast the door?”

“Make fast the door? Nay, set it wide!
Nay, pluck it wholly from the hinge!
So shall heaven’s glory hell deride,
And all the outer darkness tinge

“With radiant pulse from pole to pole,
And mercy from the Mercy-seat
Stream out and clothe this naked soul,
And flowers break up beneath his feet.”

The Sleep

I LAID me down, and slept.
And I awaked. The long night thro'
My pulse its rhythm unconscious kept ;
Unconscious breath I drew.

O Lord, it was not I
Who wrought this marvel unaware.
I slept, for Thou unseen wast nigh—
Awaked, for Thou wast there.

Earth-Bound

ON branch and spray a myriad wings
Flutter and strain in leafy flight ;
The great tree feels their tug, and swings
Through all its height.

So winged with hopes and quick desires,
So rooted to the worldly core,
The soul within us sways, aspires,
But cannot soar.

John Calvin's Dream

THE books had been closed and the Judgment
was done ;
The stars had fallen, and black was the sun ;
The Lord is a just and terrible God !

And heaven and earth had been swept away
In the blood-red storm of the Judgment-day ;
The Lord is a just and terrible God !

And behold ! in the heaven and earth made new
The Tree of Life by the water grew ;
The Lord is a just and terrible God !

John Calvin's Dream 211

And under its branches was sorrow unknown ;
And all the Angels stood round the Throne ;
The Lord is a just and terrible God !

And clothed in white raiment a countless throng
Waved shining palms and sang a new song ;
The Lord is a just and terrible God !

And shawm and timbrel and psaltery and fife
Shook the golden boughs of the Tree of Life ;
The Lord is a just and terrible God !

And lo !—though heaven and earth were glad—
The great human heart of Christ was sad ;
The Lord is a just and terrible God !

And He looked at the Blest : “ Of all that were
dear—
Of all that I died for—how few are here ! ”
The Lord is a just and terrible God !

And piercing the silence, 'twixt psalm and psalm,
Vague murmurs He heard in the heavenly calm ;
The Lord is a just and terrible God !

And faint far echoes of wailing came
From the outer dark and the deathless flame ;
The Lord is a just and terrible God !

Save Christ's human heart, there was none that
heard
The faint cry of anguish, the bitter word ;
The Lord is a just and terrible God !

But ever some voice between psalm and psalm
Sent a throb of pain through the blissful calm :
The Lord is a just and terrible God !

"It was not for *us* that He died," one said ;
"Or ever He came *we* were doomed and dead !" *The Lord is a just and terrible God !*

"He died such long ages before," one cried,
"Men knew not for certain that *ever* He died !" *The Lord is a just and terrible God !*

"He died for us—truly. I saw it !" one said ;
"But only God knew that a God was dead !" *The Lord is a just and terrible God !*

"Yea, truly, a God!—not a man to know
Man in his weakness, man in his woe!"

The Lord is a just and terrible God!

"Lord Christ, I would pity and spare *Thee*," one
said,
"Wert Thou, the Lord, man, and I Lord in Thy
stead!"

The Lord is a just and terrible God!

"Remember *me*, Christ, for I stood at Thy knee
When the children were suffered to come unto
Thee!"

The Lord is a just and terrible God!

"He forgets how we played," said a low sobbing
breath,

"In the street by the fountain at Nazareth!"

The Lord is a just and terrible God!

And Christ's heart ached; He felt the tears rise
And darken out heaven from His human eyes;

The Lord is a just and terrible God!

But ever the shawm and timbrel and fife
Shook the golden boughs of the Tree of Life ;
The Lord is a just and terrible God !

And He said, " Do the men made perfect hear
No sounds of the Lost who were once so dear ? "
The Lord is a just and terrible God !

And the Thousands Signed : " We hear no word ;
For these which are dead praise not the Lord. "
The Lord is a just and terrible God !

Then the Lord Himself said, " Son, let be ;
Even as it falleth, so lieth the tree. "
The Lord is a just and terrible God !

But Christ said, " Once yet again will I die
For these which in utter anguish lie ! "
The Lord is a just and terrible God !

" It may not be, Son, " the Lord God said,
" For sin is cast out and death is dead. "
The Lord is a just and terrible God !

Christ rose : " If I cannot die again,
I will go to my Lost in their endless pain ! "

The Lord is a just and terrible God !

And an awful shuddering silence fell
As Christ went forth to the gates of hell.

The Lord is a just and terrible God !

.

And with a cry of terror Calvin woke,
Spread aguish hands, and raised to heaven a face
Haggard and wet with agony of soul.

" Pity me, God ! " he moaned ; " nor judge the
sin

Corrupted nature blindly sins in sleep !
Deal clemently, nor visit with Thy wrath,
O Lord, Thou God most terrible and just,
The raving blasphemy of evil dreams ! "

Spring-Water

WHEN men from all the region brought
Great gifts to the Great King,
One poorest wight could offer nought
But water from the spring.

The Great King smiled, well pleased ; and Thou,
Lord, wilt not Thou receive
My simple trust in Thee, which now
Is all my dearth can give ?

The Moss

WHEN black despair beats down my wings,
And heavenly visions fade away—
Lord, let me bend to common things,
The tasks of every day;

As, when th' aurora is denied
And blinding blizzards round him beat,
The Samoyed stoops, and takes for guide
The moss beneath his feet.

Easter Dawn

LOVE sought Thee in the darkness ere the day;
Love came with spices, weeping, full of care.
The stone which closed Thy tomb they rolled away;
But Thou—Thou wast not there.

Love found Thy winding-sheet, and, laid apart,
Thy face-cloth wrapped together ; these alone ;
And saw an Angel—saw with trembling heart
An Angel on the stone.

Love heard Thy footsteps; turned with streaming
eyes,
Beheld, but knew Thee not, till, low and sweet,
Thy voice revealed Thee ; then with joyous cries
Fell down and clasped Thy feet.

O risen Lord, by Thy transpiercèd heart,
And by the dawn of that first Easter Day,
The winding-sheet, the face-cloth laid apart,
The grave-stone rolled away,

I pray Thee, in the darkness where I lie—
Not for a vision in the morning sun,
Not for a word that I may know him by—
(Not know my little one!)—

But only this, this only of Thy grace,
O risen Lord, this little thing alone—
Show me his grave quite empty, Lord, and place
An Angel on the stone.

Rocks of Offence

LIFE's ways are rough. Lord, help my will
To hallow every obstacle
With sacrifice and praise ;
Even as the heathen Cingalese,
Who in each stone an altar sees,
On each a blossom lays.

“ In the Shadow of Thy Wings

WHENE’ER a leaf its shadow flings,
The nestling in the sunny wood,
Mistaking leaves for mother-wings,
Opens its eager mouth for food.
But we, poor we, with tears and cries
Shrink from the peace Thy presence brings—
Too foolish yet to recognise
In death the shadow of Thy wings.

Luther's Trust

“**T**HAT little bird beneath its wing
Will hide its head and sleep.
Above it heavens of stars will swing,
And infinite darkness sweep.

“And fear it will not. God who made
The stars will watch the nest.”
This Luther once in trouble said,
And found in God his rest.

A Carol

THIS gospel sang the angels bright :
Lord Jhesu shall be born this night ;
Born not in house nor yet in hall,
Wrapped not in purple nor in pall,
Rocked not in silver, neither gold ;
This word the angels sang of old ;
Nor christened with white wine nor red ;
This word of old the angels said
Of Him which holdeth in His hand
The strong sea and green land.

This thrice and four times happy night—
These tidings sang the angels bright—
Forlorn, betwixen ear and horn,
A babe shall Jhesu Lord be born,

A weeping babe all in the cold ;—
This word the angels sang of old—
And wisps of hay shall be His bed ;
This word of old the angels said
Of Him which keepeth in His hand
The strong sea and green land.

O babe and Lord, Thou Jhesu bright,—
Let all and some now sing this night—
Betwixt our sorrow and our sin,
Be Thou new-born our hearts within ;
New-born, dear babe and little King,—
So letten some and all men sing—
To wipe for us our tears away !
This night so letten all men say
Of Him which spake, and lo ! they be—
The green land and strong sea.

When Snow Lies Deep

WHEN frost has burned the hedges black,
And children cannot sleep for cold ;
When snow lies deep on the withered leaves,
And roofs are white from ridge to eaves :
When bread is dear, and work is slack,
Take pity on the poor and old !

The faggot and the loaf of bread
You could not miss would be their store.
Upon how little the old can live !
Give like the poor—who freely give.
Remember, when the fire burns red
The wolf leaves sniffing at the door.

And you whose lives are left forlorn,
Whose sons, whose hopes, whose fires have died,
Oh, you poor pitiful people old,
Remember this and be consoled—
That Christ the Comforter was born,
And still is born, in wintertide.

Bethlehem

WHEN the herds were watching
In the midnight chill,
Came a spotless lambkin
From the heavenly hill.

Snow was on the mountains,
And the wind was cold,
When from God's own garden
Dropped a rose of gold.

When 'twas bitter winter,
Houseless and forlorn
In a star-lit stable
Christ the Babe was born.

Welcome, heavenly lambkin ;

Welcome, golden rose ;

Alleluia, Baby

In the swaddling clothes !

The Nativity

I WILL not pray, "O Lord that I
Had been at Thy nativity" ;
But rather, "Let *me*, Babe divine,
Be new-born and be Thou at mine !"

The Shepherd

BESIDE her cot, with shading hand,
She searched the hills at eventide;
Each scaur and heathery track she scanned
Until her shepherd she descried.

So be it given thee to behold,
My heart, when life's last air grows chill,
Thy Shepherd moving by the fold
At sundown on the heavenly hill.

Life and Death

GOD walked in heaven, on high, afar.
GOD thought a happy thought, and smiled
The thought fell earthward like a star;
The thought became a new-born child.

God walked and wondered : “Yesterday
What happy thought my heart enthralled ? ”
Cold, white, and sweet the infant lay—
God, smiling, had His thought recalled.

“Talitha Cumi”

EYES wet and hearts bleeding,
We laid her to rest—
Her little hands, pleading
The cross, on her breast.

Tho' bitter our weeping,
No murmur we made ;
We knew in whose keeping
Our darling was laid.

We trusted, heart-broken ;
Tear-blinded, we smiled ;
And carved for a token
“Talitha”—our child.

A Child's Prayer

THRO' the night Thy angels kept
Watch above me while I slept,
Now the dark has passed away,
Thank Thee, Lord, for this new day.

North and south and east and west
May Thy holy name be blest ;
Everywhere beneath the sun,
As in Heaven, Thy will be done.

Give me food that I may live ;
Every naughtiness forgive ;
Keep all evil things away
From Thy little child this day.

Envoi

THIS grace vouchsafe me for the rhymes I write
If any last, nor perish quick and quite,
Lord, let them be
My little images, to stand for me
When I may stand no longer in Thy sight :

Like those old statues of the King who said,
“Carve me in that which needs nor sleep nor bread
Let diorite pray,
A King of stone, for this poor King of clay
Who wearies often and must soon be dead !”

